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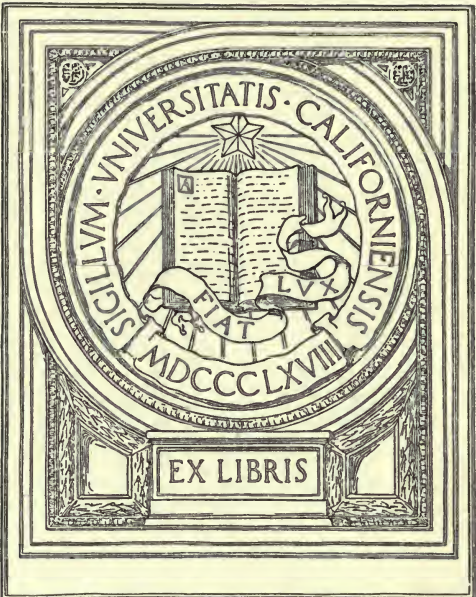
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THE

ATONING SACRIFICE,

A DISPLAY OF LOVE—NOT OF WRATH.

BY NOAH WORCESTER.

But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. **ST. PAUL.**

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **ST. JOHN.**



CAMBRIDGE :

HILLIARD AND BROWN.

1829.

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, *to wit.*

District Clerk's Office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the nineteenth day of August, A. D. 1829, in the fifty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Noah Worcester of the said district, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, *to wit* :

“The Atoning Sacrifice, a Display of Love—not of Wrath. By Noah Worcester.

‘But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.’—ST. PAUL.

‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.’—ST. JOHN.”

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;” and also to an act, entitled, “An Act supplementary to an act, entitled, ‘An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

JNO. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE following passage from the Christian Spectator will show, under what perilous prospects the subsequent pages have been written:—

“Even to discuss the subject of atonement is at the present, putting to hazard a man’s good name, if not his standing in the church. If he departs from the beaten path, the cry of *wanderer* is raised. If he refuses to use old names and old forms of expression, he is in danger of being thought heretical. Scarcely can he venture even to discuss minor points relative to the subject, without finding some one to cry out against him. This is unfortunate in regard to discovering what is true, and discouraging to those who incline to pursue investigations of this nature. Still there are minds deeply enough engaged in this great cause, to venture upon the pursuit of what is scriptural, and upon the rejection of what philosophy has added to the Scriptures.”

These remarks are found in a review of the Rev. S. E. Dwight’s Sermons on the Death of Christ. Report says that the review was written by a respected professor in one of our theological seminaries—by a man whose opportunities to know the state of feeling which he describes, have probably been far better than mine. I shall, therefore, not call in question the correctness of his testimony. But if it be true, I may say, that a state of feeling exists which I am unable to reconcile with either humility, candor, or benevolence,—a feeling too, which, so long as it shall prevail, must operate as an obstacle to impartial inquiry and to the progress of light. Admitting the truth of the state-

ment, the reader will perceive that in publishing the results of laborious inquiry, on one of the most interesting subjects, I must do it at the risk of what is dearer to a good man than life itself, *his Christian character*. But my situation is neither singular nor unprecedented. From the time of the Messiah's ministry to the present hour, Christian truth has had to make its advances against the *tide* of popular prejudice, and the *wind* of persecuting clamor. If the Savior and his apostles were not deterred from publishing their unpopular doctrines by the reproaches and menaces of self-sufficient men, why should I hesitate through fear that "the cry of *wanderer*" will be raised against me? or by the "danger of being thought heretical?" Under a clear conviction of the perils which await the man who by patient inquiry finds reason to "depart from the beaten path," the following chapters have been written. They have also been written in a firm belief of the atoning sacrifice by Jesus Christ, and of its saving efficacy to all who are so influenced by it, as to learn of him who was meek and lowly of heart.

About two years ago my mind was called to this subject by reading a Family Sermon in the Christian Observer. The following was the passage which arrested my attention.

"When the gates of Paradise closed upon our first parents, in consequence of the introduction of sin into the world, men no longer beheld in their Maker a friend; but felt, and justly, that his displeasure was excited against them; nor was there longer any way of access to the throne of a justly offended Majesty. But the word of God has pointed out to us a source of pardon and way of intercourse through a Mediator, by virtue of whose merits and obedience, we may return to him and find favor at his hands, notwithstanding all our transgressions."

Christ. Obs. for Nov. 1826.

I had often read similar representations, but never before with a similar effect on my mind. The sentiment, that after sin entered the world "men no longer beheld in their Maker a friend," occasioned a feeling of horror

which I cannot describe. The declaration is so clearly contradicted by the history of God's providence towards our first parents, and by the character he has given of himself in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, that I could not but wonder that the passage had found a place in the Christian Observer. I then resolved that, should my life and health be spared, I would endeavor to obtain more clear and satisfactory views of the atonement than I at that time possessed. The more I examined, the more I became convinced, that the atoning sacrifice was intimately connected with the Christian principles of peace, which had then for a long time occupied my attention;—and that it was in the strictest sense of the words a **PACIFIC MEASURE**, a **RECONCILING SACRIFICE**—made from love to enemies, and on the gospel principle of overcoming evil with good. It has been with me a principal object in writing, to evince that in this sacrifice there was a display of *love*—not of wrath. If on this point I have failed, I have labored in vain. But if in this particular I have been successful, I cannot but indulge a hope that what I have written will be an occasion of relief and comfort to many reflecting Christians. For many, I am persuaded, like myself, have been perplexed with the awful idea, that the sufferings of the Son of God were occasioned by displays of God's anger or avenging justice against him as our substitute; and that this was the only way in which divine benevolence could be exercised in the pardon of penitent sinners.

In this work I wish to be regarded not as the advocate nor as the opponent of any denomination of Christians, but as the friend of truth and the friend of peace. Indeed I know not that my present views on this subject accord with those of any sect, or any individual Christian. Still I have a hope that many things in the work will be found accordant with the *feelings* of many good men in every denomination.

Viewing the atoning sacrifice as a strong expression of God's forgiving love, and of his desire to reconcile sinners to himself and to one another, I have deemed it a solemn

duty in writing on the subject, to forbear the indulgence of any feelings or passions towards any class of my fellow men, which are inconsistent with that divine principle on which I believe the Messiah laid down his life. Whether I have conformed to the obligations which result from the benevolent nature of my subject, my readers will judge for themselves. Wishing to avoid as much as possible the appearance of controversy, as well as its usual spirit; when I began to write with a view to publication, I thought I should avoid naming any sect or any writer, except the inspired writers; but I was induced to relinquish this plan through a fear that I might be accused of misrepresenting the opinions from which I dissented, unless I should quote from respectable authors and give their names. But I think I may say with truth, that I have named no writer with a view to injure his reputation. I may here add, that I have too much evidence of my liability to err, to make my present opinions a test by which to judge the hearts of my fellow Christians. In respect to the interpretations that I have given of the numerous texts which have demanded my attention, I can hardly hope that I have made no mistake. It is sufficient for me to say, that I have sought their true meaning, and have given that which appeared to me to be the meaning of the inspired writers. I may in some instances have misapprehended the meaning of a text, and yet the theory I have attempted to establish may be correct. The candid will not censure by wholesale. I have only to request of my Christian brethren, that they would consider the importance, the solemnity, and the affecting nature of the subject, and the liability of all men to err; and then exercise toward me that candor and impartiality, which each of them would reasonably desire in an exchange of circumstances.

THE
ATONING SACRIFICE,

A DISPLAY OF LOVE—NOT OF WRATH.

CHAPTER I.

An Appeal to the Benevolent Heart.

IN the gospel, God is revealed to us as our Father. The relation of father and son is well known to men of every land; and it was doubtless for the purpose of exciting in our minds reverence and filial affection that the gospel was sent to us as a message of love from a kind Father to disobedient children. For a similar purpose the Messiah taught his disciples thus to address their prayers to God—"Our Father who art in heaven." To cause the truth to sink deep into the minds of his hearers, respecting the fatherly concern of God for his children, and his readiness to hear and answer their requests, our Saviour thus reasoned.—"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a *father*, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!"*

* Luke xi. 11, 12: Matt. vii, 11.

To represent the tender feelings of God towards the disobedient, his readiness to pardon the penitent, and his joy on seeing any one of them return from his evil ways, our Lord uttered the parable of the prodigal son. Here I may ask, what benevolent parent ever attentively read or heard this parable, without being touched and melted, by the compassion and tender solicitude of the father of this prodigal—his readiness to go out to meet the returning son while he was yet a great way off—the affection with which he received and embraced the penitent child—his disposition to overlook all his past disobedience and profligacy—and the various forms in which the father expressed his joy and his forgiving love on beholding evidence of contrition in his long-lost son? What a privilege do we all possess in having such a Father for our God!

We see then that our Divine Instructor made use of the known feelings of an earthly parent towards his children, to represent to us the greater love of our heavenly Father towards us all. May I not then be justified in appealing to the hearts of benevolent parents to convince them that some of the most prevalent views of the atoning sacrifice are possibly and probably incorrect, dishonorable to God, and injurious to those who possess them? To every Christian who knows by experience the feelings of a tender father, the following appeal is made.

Would you not deem it a reproach, should it be currently reported, that you are of such a disposition, that if a child has once disobeyed your commands, he can no longer “behold in his *father* a friend?” And that you never forgive even a penitent child without first making a terrible display of your anger on an innocent son, as a substitute for the guilty?

Suppose again that this report originated with your friends, that they circulated it in the belief that such conduct on your part was great evidence of your wisdom and rectitude, and that such a disposition in you was the glory of your character ; would you not, nevertheless, be grieved that such an opinion had acquired belief ? Would you not say that your friends had certainly formed mistaken views in regard to your feelings and your conduct towards your children ? that although you had known them to transgress, and had been much grieved when they had gone astray, yet your loving kindness had never been withdrawn from them, and that they could still behold in their father a friend ? that you never had done such a thing as to inflict evil on an innocent son, as a substitute for the guilty, and that the thought of so doing was enough to fill your mind with horror ?

I will go one step further. Suppose that of the many friends who had believed the unfavorable report, one, if not more, had become fully convinced, not only that the report was a misrepresentation of facts, but really injurious to your reputation ; would you not deem it incumbent on him, as your friend, to endeavor to convince his brethren ? And should he plead that he could not do so without exposing himself to suspicion and reproach—that many would be likely to say, that while he professes to be your friend he is at heart your enemy ; would this in your opinion be a sufficient excuse ? If these questions should receive such answers from your conscience as I think they will, I may proceed with my appeal.

Is there then no danger that your views of the atonement are incorrect, while they impute to God a moral character which you would deem reproachful if imputed

to yourself? I say a *moral character*, because God's mode of forgiveness must proceed from his own disposition, and not from any extraneous cause, or any defect of knowledge or power.

The effects which I wish to produce by this appeal are these—a conviction that the question to be discussed is of the most serious nature; a question relating to the moral character of God, and consequently one which demands of the writer, and the reader, the spirit of candor and impartiality, with a sincere desire to know and understand what the Spirit has said to the churches on this important subject.

All who have duly attended to the history of our Savior's ministry, must have observed the sad effects which resulted to the unbelieving Jews, from their self-sufficiency and the confidence with which they adhered to traditional opinions, relating to their expected Messiah. This self-sufficiency and this confidence prepared them to reject the clearest proofs of the divinity of our Lord's mission, and to impute to "the faithful and true witness" the character of an impostor and a blasphemer. The facts of this case were doubtless recorded as an admonition to succeeding generations of men, and particularly of Christians, lest they should reject discoveries of the truth, on the same ground that the Scribes and Pharisees rejected Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

We are required to be "followers of God as dear children." By which I understand that we should cultivate in our own hearts such love to one another, as God has manifested towards us all. If then it should be found that opinions have been adopted which impute to God a moral character which a good man cannot imitate, and would

deem reproachful if imputed to himself; should we not inquire with great candor and seriousness, whether those opinions did not result from misinterpretations of Scripture? The ambiguity of words and phrases is often an occasion of error. If I am correct in the opinion that erroneous views of the atonement have been extensively entertained, I think it will be found that the ambiguity of a few words and phrases has probably been in a great measure the occasion of those errors. When an hypothesis has become popular, respecting the purpose of God in an important event, the passages of Scripture which relate to that occurrence will of course be so explained as to favor the received hypothesis. The passages may be so ambiguous as to be obviously capable of two very different meanings; yet that meaning will be esteemed the most natural, which habit has rendered most familiar to the mind. Hence it may require much candor and reflection to dispose a person to relinquish a meaning which is really false, for the one intended by the inspired writer. Had the word *atonement* been used only in the sense which the writers of opposite opinions acknowledge to be its true meaning, and had there been but one sense in which a person may be said to die or suffer for another, or to bear the sins of many, the church of Christ might probably never have been agitated by controversies relating to his death. And even this discord of opinion, great as it really is, would not have produced bitterness and alienation, had Christians in general been duly aware of the liability of all men to err, and had each been disposed to exercise such candor towards others as he thinks others ought to exercise towards himself.

CHAPTER II.

General Remarks and Explanations.

THAT the gospel atonement, rightly understood, is a subject of great importance, will be generally admitted by the several denominations of Christians. Yet perhaps there is not another subject on which there is so great a diversity of opinion. Not only do writers of different sects disagree, but there are perhaps no two writers of any sect who perfectly harmonize in their views and explanations. This circumstance should excite candor, and not reproach and bitterness. It is not for me to doubt that all who have written on the subject have expressed such views as they deemed correct, and most honorable to God. It would be doing violence both to my faith and my feelings to impute the discordant opinions of my brethren to the wickedness of their hearts. "Judge not, that ye be not judged," is a precept which I think is worthy of more regard than it has generally received from fallible Christians of different sects.

The words *atone* and *atonement* will frequently occur in this work. And as in my younger years I was led into error by misapprehending the meaning of the words; I shall here give an explanation which I think will be admitted by the learned and impartial of all denominations.

"*Atonement*—When the word is divided into syllables, its meaning will be evident to every reader—*At-one-ment*. Thus *to atone* is to *make one* or to reconcile parties at variance; and to *make atonement* is to bring about reconciliation and peace." *Brown's Dict. of the Bible.*

These definitions were given by a learned Professor of Divinity and a minister of the Presbyterian church of Scotland. The same definitions have been given by several writers of different sects in our country. That they are correct may appear probable from the fact, that the word *atonement* occurs but once in the common version of the New Testament, and in that case it is acknowledged to stand as a substitute for the word *reconciliation*.

There never perhaps was a sacrifice to which the word *atonement* was more properly applied than that made by the death of the Messiah. But it is proper to observe, that though atonement signifies reconciliation, yet the typical sacrifices to which it was applied were but *means* of reconciliation; and such is the fact in regard to the gospel sacrifice—the name of the *end* being applied to the appointed *means*. But this is a common figure of speech in the Bible. It is on the same principle that Christ is said to be “made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

Atonement, however, means not merely *reconciliation*, but *purification* or *cleansing*. This was probably its principal meaning when atonements were made for inanimate objects, the tabernacle, the sanctuary, the altar, and the house infected by the leprosy. This meaning was also implied in the annual atonements made for the people of Israel, as will be shown in the chapter on the Mosaic atonements. But this last meaning is not at all repugnant to the other. For moral impurity is what separates the sinner from God: let him be *cleansed*, and he is reconciled, *at-one* with God.

As I shall have occasion to speak of substituted sufferings, I wish it to be understood that I freely admit, that

the Messiah actually *suffered for sinners*, and for the purpose of saving them from sin and suffering. But I do not admit that the sufferings of Christ were the effects of divine anger or avenging justice against him as our substitute. Nor do I admit that his sufferings were designed to appease the anger of God towards sinners, nor to effect any change of feeling in the divine mind. I view them as means for effecting a change in *us*—not in God. I shall use the following phrases as synonymous—“substituted suffering”—“substituted punishment”—“vicarious suffering”—“vicarious punishment”—meaning by each the sufferings or punishment which Christians have supposed that Christ endured as the substitute for sinners.

Wishing, if possible, to avoid even the appearance of misrepresenting the opinions of my Christian brethren, I deem it proper in this place to give a special explanation on one point. I have given to the work this title. “The Atoning Sacrifice, a Display of Love—not of Wrath,” and in various parts of the work I have used language corresponding with the title, to intimate a contrast between my own views and the most popular theory on the subject. It may therefore be suspected that I was ignorant of the fact, or unwilling to admit it, that those from whom I dissent avowedly believe that the atonement had its *origin* in the love of God to sinners. I am aware that they do avow this belief; nor have I a wish to intimate the contrary. Still I think there is ample ground for the distinction suggested by the title of the work. This I shall attempt to illustrate.

Let it then be fully admitted that the advocates for substituted sufferings both believe and teach, that the atoning sacrifice originated in the love of God. Still they also

teach, that the *atonement itself* consisted in such displays of divine anger or justice, inflicted on the Son of God, as were a proper substitute and equivalent for the everlasting miseries due to the innumerable millions of mankind.

On the other hand, the theory of the atonement, which I think is taught in the Bible, implies no expression of God's anger, or of punitive justice, in the sufferings of his Son. Should a king, from real benevolence to revolted subjects, knowingly expose an only son to sufferings and to death, by sending him among them, on what he deems a necessary errand of mercy, to reclaim the rebels and save them from ruin; we should not hesitate to say, that the king has displayed extraordinary love to his subjects, in "not sparing his own son, but delivering him up" to suffering and death for the benefit of men who had become his enemies. In speaking on the subject, we should be ready to say emphatically, "*Herein is love!*" or "*Behold, what manner of love!*" It is in a sense analogous to this that I think God has "commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Therefore, as on the one hypothesis the atonement was made by an awful display of avenging justice, and on the other by an extraordinary display of saving love, I think there can be no ground to object to the distinction intimated in the title of the work.

As men have long been in the habit of regarding punishment as the effect of divine anger—as the language of the Bible favors the idea, and as the advocates for substituted sufferings have abundantly used such phrases, as "the wrath of God" and "the anger of God" in reference to the atonement; I have used similar phrases in

reference to their views. But I have not done this from a belief that there is any thing in God corresponding to the vindictive passion of anger in men. Yet so far, and in the same sense, as divine wrath is manifested in *punishment*, it must be manifested in a *substitute* for punishment, which is made by displays of punitive justice. With real pleasure, however, I have observed, that many modern writers in favor of substituted sufferings, have avoided the use of such harsh language and revolting representations, as were common at a former period in describing the manner in which God treated his Son while on the cross. I hope this change is an indication of something more important than a mere advance in literary taste. I am inclined to impute it to the progress of light, and a growing conviction, that there is something in the doctrine of substituted penal sufferings too shocking to be expressed in bold, emphatic language.

CHAPTER III.

Various Purposes of the Messiah's Death.

It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and for the same object he laid down his life as an atoning sacrifice. But as the ultimate purpose implied subordinate purposes, I shall exhibit the various objects of his death, as stated by himself and his Apostles. I shall first mention such purposes as were stated by the Savior himself.

1. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever

believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John iii. 14, 15. "The Son of man came—to give his life a ransom for many." Matt. xx. 28.

These passages clearly represent that human salvation was the object of the Messiah's death. But subordinate objects were to be effected by the same sacrifice. Hence,

2. Jesus died, that he might rise again. "I lay down my life, that I might take it again.—This commandment I have received of my father." John x. 17, 18.

3. Jesus died, that the new covenant might be ratified with his blood. When Moses confirmed the Old covenant, "he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." It was probably in allusion to these facts, that when our Lord instituted the memorial of his death, on giving the cup to his disciples he said, "This is my blood of the New Covenant that is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. xxvi. 28. That such was the meaning of Christ may appear further probable from what is said by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. While representing the New Covenant as confirmed by the death of Christ, he says—"Whereupon neither the first covenant was dedicated without blood." He then thus quotes the words of Moses: "This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you." Heb. ix. 18, 20.

4. Jesus died "that all things *might* be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning *him*." Luke xxiv. 44.

5. "It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name

among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

6. Jesus died to prepare the way for the miraculous effusions of the Spirit, by which his Apostles were enabled to confirm his doctrine, and the fact of his resurrection as the Messiah, and to propagate his gospel. A little before his arrest, he thus said to his disciples—"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you.—He will guide you into all truth; and he will show you things to come." John xvi. 7. 13.

7. Jesus died; not only that he might rise again, but that he might ascend to a glorified state.—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke xxiv. 26. The same idea was communicated by Peter to the Jewish Sanhedrim. Acts v. 30, 31; and by Paul to the Christians at Rome. Rom. xiv. 9.

Several other purposes of our Lord's death were mentioned by his Apostles.

1. Jesus died that he might be perfected through suffering. "For it became Him"—that is, it became God—"in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."* "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." And, "being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."†

2. Jesus died as the Antitype of the bloody sacrifices instituted by the ministry of Moses. "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.—But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." Heb. x. 3. 12.

* Heb. ii. 10.

† Heb. v. 8, 9.

In the Mosaic sacrifices the people were reminded of their sins, of their obligations to repent, and of God's readiness to pardon the penitent. Under the New Covenant we are reminded of the same things by the more affecting sacrifice made by the death of our Lord. For,

3. Christ died to give the highest ground of assurance of God's love to sinful men, and of his desire for their reconciliation.—“But God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Rom. v. 8. “He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Rom. viii. 32. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” 1 Pet. iii. 18.

4. Jesus died to abolish the separating wall between Jews and Gentiles, and to unite all the tribes of men in one family and one religion. Thus said Paul to the Ephesians: “But now, in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” Eph. ii. 13-16.

It may be worthy of remark, that the reconciliation between the Jews and the Gentiles, is ascribed to the *blood* and the cross of Christ, in the same manner as is the reconciliation between sinners and God, the pardon of sin, or any other blessing of the New Covenant.

5. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." 1 Peter ii. 21.

Though I have placed this last, it is surely not the least in importance of the various purposes for which Jesus died. For unless we imbibe the temper with which he endured his sufferings, the other objects of his mission will be of little avail to us.

Twelve objects of the Messiah's sufferings have now been stated—*seven* mentioned by himself, and *five* by his Apostles. There may be others which have escaped my notice, and others still which are not revealed. Dr. Paley, in his sermons on the "Efficacy of the Death of Christ," observes,—“Others have died martyrs as well as our Lord—others have suffered in a good cause as well as he. But that is said of his death and sufferings which is not said of any other. An efficacy and concern is ascribed to them in the business of our salvation, which is not ascribed to any other.” The dignity of the Savior and the various purposes for which he died may account for the facts mentioned by Dr. Paley. For it is believed that no other sufferer ever possessed such dignity, or ever sustained such a variety of interesting relations to the world, as did the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Captain of our salvation;—and we may believe that no other person ever suffered for such a variety of important purposes subordinate to one grand and all-important purpose—human salvation. On his obedience unto death depended the ratification of the gospel covenant with its infinity of blessings for time and eternity.

CHAPTER IV.

Atonements under the Mosaic Dispensation.

As the Mosaic sacrifices were shadows or types of good things to come, it may be expected that correct views of these will afford light on the sacrifice made by the death of the Messiah. I shall therefore exhibit some facts relating to what are called atonements in the Old Testament.

First. The tenth day of the seventh month in every year was appointed to be observed as a day of atonement for the nation of Israel;—on which day the people were to “afflict,” or humble themselves, and the priest was “to make an atonement for them, to cleanse them, that they might be clean from all their sins before the Lord.” The day was to be observed with great solemnity, and symbolical acts were to be performed, which seem to have been well adapted to impress the minds of the people with a sense of their guilt, and the pardoning mercy of the Lord. Lev. xxiii. 27–32.

Secondly. Atonements were instituted for particular offences of individuals. The ceremonies on these occasions were of a similar tendency to those of the annual atonements. The goodness of God is apparent in what was required to be offered by each individual, as respect was had to his ability. If able, he was to offer a lamb or a kid; if not able for this, two doves or pigeons were to be accepted; if this was too much for his ability, a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour was all that was required. It is then added—“and the priest shall make an atonement

for him, for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him." Lev. v. 10.

Thirdly. On taking a census of the people, each person that was numbered, "twenty years old and above," was required to pay half a shekel as an "atonement for his soul;" and the money was to be devoted to the service of the tabernacle. The money thus paid is called "a ransom for his soul"—"atonement for his soul," and atonement money." Exodus xxx. 12-16.

Fourthly. After the conquest of the Midianites, it was found on inquiry, that not a man of Israel had perished in the war. The men of war, therefore, agreed to bring an offering to the Lord of the abundance of gold which they had taken—"to make," as they said, "an atonement for our souls before the Lord." Numb. xxxi. 50.

Fifthly. An atonement was required at the induction of men to the offices of the priesthood. When Aaron and his sons were inducted, Moses officiated. The Levites were afterwards consecrated by an atonement. Lev. viii. and Numb. viii. 17-21.

Sixthly. Atonements were made for the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and the altar; also for houses infected by the leprosy. Lev. xvi. 33; also xiv. 53.

Atonements different from any of the foregoing were made on special indications of God's displeasure. Four cases may be exhibited.

1. Moses having been long absent on the mount, the people became impatient, and prevailed on Aaron to make the golden calf. Moses soon appeared among them, and caused many of the transgressors to be slain. He then said to the survivors—"Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make

an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned to the Lord, and said—O this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” *Exod. xxxii. 30–33.*

This confession and prayer were the atonement made by Moses on this awful occasion.

2. On the morrow after the destruction of Korah and his confederates, others dared to rebel. A plague immediately began to make its ravages among the people. By the direction of Moses, Aaron took a censer with fire and incense, and went forth into the midst of the congregation; and he put on incense and made an atonement for the people; “and he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.” *Numb. xvi. 48.*

3. The conduct of Phinehas in slaying Zimri and the Midianitish woman, whom he had brought into the camp contrary to the command of God, is called an atonement. In rewarding Phinehas with a promise of the priesthood, the Lord assigned this reason, “because he was zealous for his God, and made an *atonement* for the children of Israel.” *Numb. xxv. 6–8. 13.*

In this case the atonement was made by destroying the guilty.

4. In the days of David the land was afflicted with a famine three years. “David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered—It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.” David then inquired of the Gibeonites—“What shall I do for you? and where-with shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?” The Gibeonites proposed that

seven men of the sons of Saul should be given up to them to be hanged at Gibeah. David complied; and thus the atonement was made to the Gibeonites. 2 Sam. xxi. 1-9.

It was a law in Israel that the son should not die for the sin of the father; we may therefore suppose that the persons who were thus delivered up, had been accessaries in the wrongs done to the Gibeonites; and this may be intimated by the words—"Saul and his bloody house." This may then be a second case, in which an atonement was made by destroying the guilty.

We have now in view various forms of making an atonement, and different senses in which the word was used. In the second Chapter of this work the general meaning of the word was explained to be *at-one-ment*, or *reconciliation*. It was also observed that atonement means *cleansing* or *purification*. That it does so when it was made for inanimate objects, the sanctuary, the tabernacle, perhaps no one will doubt; and this was doubtless the meaning when it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "almost all things are *purged*"—that is, *cleansed*—"by blood." The idea of cleansing or purification was also implied in the annual atonements for the congregation. For the priest was expressly required "to make atonement for them, to *cleanse* them, that they may be *clean* before the Lord."

The atonements made "for the soul," or the life, by paying the half shekel when the people were numbered, and when the men of war brought their offerings of gold, were, it seems to me, symbolical and grateful acknowledgments of dependence on God, as the Author and Preserver of life. However, when properly offered, they tend-

ed to purify the heart, and to bring men near to God ; and these are the legitimate purposes of atonements.

The atonements made on the induction of men to the priestly office, were adapted to impress them with just sentiments of their unworthiness, their need of cleansing and reconciliation, and their obligations to God for calling them to such an important work.

The four instances of atonements, made under special indications of God's displeasure, were of an extraordinary nature. One of them was made by the confession and prayer of Moses, who was the Mediator of the Old Covenant. The second by Aaron's placing himself between the dead and the living, and there burning incense, which was doubtless accompanied with his own prayers, the prayers of Moses, and other good men. In the other two cases, the atonements were made by destroying the guilty.

No one, it is presumed, will venture to say that the destruction of Zimri and the seven sons of Saul, were so much as shadows of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Yet these were the only atonements that have been brought to view from the Old Testament, in which the anger of God was displayed in the manner of making the sacrifice.

The annual atonements for the whole congregation, and the occasional atonements for individual offences, were, in my opinion, so far from being displays of God's anger, that they were merciful institutions, adapted to the purpose of impressing the minds of people with a deep sense of their guilt and ill desert, and of the long-suffering and forgiving love of God. It is very true that animals were slain for these sacrifices ; they are also slain for food for sinners ; and I see no more display of God's anger in the

former case than in the latter. The ceremony of laying the hands on the head of the devoted animals, and confessing sins over them, were affecting ceremonies to the spectators, but they occasioned no pain to the victims, whether destined to be slain, or to be sent as scape-goats into the wilderness. They, however, indicated how ready God was to cancel the transgressions of those who suitably humbled themselves for their offences.

As the typical atonements were designed to effect reconciliation and cleansing, so was the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Of those who obey the gospel it may truly be said, they have been "reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" and the same persons may say, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But reconciliation and cleansing are moral or spiritual, not physical, effects.

It may be proper also to remark, that the Mosaic sacrifices were symbolical acts and instituted forms of worship; and, like other external forms, their acceptableness with God depended on the disposition or temper of the worshippers. If they presented their sin-offerings with a broken heart or contrite spirit, it was truly acceptable to God. But however abundant their sin-offerings or symbolical confessions of sin might be, if offered with an impenitent mind, or hands "full of blood," their conduct was odious in the sight of him who looketh on the heart. It hence appears to me impossible that the typical atonements could be of the nature of substitutes for punishment. They were doubtless merciful institutions to *prevent* punishment by effecting reconciliation.

The days of annual atonement among the Israelites, in respect to their design, may perhaps be properly com-

pared with the days of annual fasting in New England. They were days in which the people were called on to unite in humbling themselves before God for their offences, confessing their sins, and imploring the forgiveness of God. Their sin-offerings were symbolical acts by which they confessed their sins and their desert of divine displeasure; and by which also they expressed their hope of pardon.

CHAPTER V.

The Passover.

THE Passover appears to have had all the characteristics of an atonement, except the name; and in what is said of the death of the Messiah, in the New Testament, there is perhaps more frequent allusions to the paschal sacrifice than to any other of the Mosaic institutions. The Passover then may afford light on the great subject of inquiry.

When God was about to smite all the first born of Egypt, he made a merciful provision for the Israelites, that all their families might be exempted from so great a calamity, by a compliance with very easy conditions. They were forewarned of the time when the first-born of Egypt were to be slain, and what to do for their own safety. The calamity was to commence at midnight. In the evening, each family of the Israelites was to sacrifice a lamb, unless the family was too small. In that case, two families were to unite and slay one lamb for both.

They were to take of the blood of the lamb and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of their houses, and eat the flesh in that night roasted with fire. Respecting the blood, the Lord said to them—"The blood shall be to you for a *token* upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you, to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." Exod. xii. 13.

As a memorial of such mercy to them, the Israelites were required to observe the Passover, as a national anniversary in all succeeding ages. In reference to posterity the following directions were given to the parents: "It shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service, that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses." Exod. xii. 26, 27.

The Passover was obviously instituted as a saving sacrifice, and well adapted to make good impressions on the minds of the Israelites. But what do we see in it of divine anger, or substituted punishment? There was indeed *preventive* sufferings. The lamb suffered death to *prevent* the Israelites from being involved in calamity. But the sufferings of the lamb were not a substitute for the sufferings which might justly have been inflicted on the people of Israel. They were only appointed means for preventing evil. The whole affair appears to me an expression of mercy to a sinful people, and designed to lead them to reflect on their guilt and ill desert, and to place their hope in a forgiving God.

I am not aware of any thing in the Old Testament more clearly typical of the death of the Messiah, than the pas-

chal sacrifice. So clear was this in the view of Paul, that he said to his Christian brethren—"For even Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." On the same ground Christ is called the "Lamb of God," "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." So we also read of "the blood of the Lamb," "the blood of sprinkling." The saints are represented as having, "made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb," and the Christians are represented as having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Such language is figurative, and denotes great benefits resulting to mankind from the death of Christ. No Christian has literally washed his robes in Christ's blood, or been sprinkled with it; but Christ has by his death procured spiritual blessings for us, and the means of moral cleansing.

The annual observance of the Passover was commemorative, to perpetuate the remembrance of the great event, when God employed the blood of lambs as a token of his mercy, and as a means of redeeming the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. In like manner the Lord's supper is a commemorative institution, to keep alive in the minds of men that great event, when the everlasting covenant of mercy to sinners was sealed by the *blood* of "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world,"—or by which men are redeemed from iniquity by being reconciled unto God.

CHAPTER VI.

Sacrifices not Substitutes for Punishment.

THE word *sacrifice*, as used in the Bible, most commonly means an offering to the Lord. Cain and Abel brought each of them an offering to the Lord; but by faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. By the Mosaic laws a multitude of sacrifices were instituted, as symbolic acts of worship, confession of sin, supplication for pardon and other favors, or thanksgiving for mercies received. When the offering was made with hearts corresponding to the purpose of the symbols, they were acceptable to God, and means of procuring divine favor; but, like all other external forms of worship, their acceptableness to God depended on the temper of the worshippers. It is also to be observed, that those exercises of heart which the symbols were designed to excite or call forth, are also denominated sacrifices, whether accompanied by the symbols or not. Hence David, in confessing his aggravated sins, said to God—“Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Ps. li. 16, 17. Paul exhorted the Christians at Rome to “present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God.” Rom. xii. 1. To the Hebrews it is said—“By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased.” Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

By the conversation between Christ and a discreet scribe, it appears that they agreed in the opinion, that to love God with all the heart and our neighbor as ourselves, "is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." Mark xii. 33.

Not only was Christ our passover sacrificed for us, but Paul spoke of offering himself, or being offered. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Philip. ii. 17. To Timothy he thus wrote,—“ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” 2 Tim. iv. 6.

In the following strong language Paul acknowledged a timely and liberal donation from the Philippians. "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a *sacrifice* acceptable, well pleasing unto God." Philip. iv. 18.

Nearly in the same language he spoke of the more important sacrifice of Christ, while he exhorted the Ephesians to imitate the love of both God and his Son. "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an *offering* and a *sacrifice to God* for a sweet smelling savor." Eph. v. 1, 2. From this passage we may very safely infer, that it was the love of Christ in laying down his life for us, that rendered the sacrifice so acceptable to God.

From the passages already quoted I think it is evident, that the Mosaic sacrifices were not substitutes for punishment, but acts of worship; and that under the gospel dispensation those affections of heart which rendered symbolic acts of worship acceptable to God, are now accounted acceptable sacrifices without the Mosaic symbols. If

David had supposed the Mosaic sacrifices to be substitutes for punishment, would he, while in distress for his sins, and in an address to God, have spoken of a "broken heart," as more important than the symbolic sacrifice? If Christ and the scribe had supposed the Mosaic sacrifices as appointed substitutes for punishment, would they have agreed that *love* was "more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices?"

There are, however, other passages to prove that sacrifices were not substitutes for punishment, and that they were of less importance than a humble, merciful, and obedient heart. These ideas are clearly contained in Samuel's reproof to Saul, and in other passages which will be quoted. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice." 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23.—"I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Hosea vi. 6.—"To do justice and judgment, is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Prov. xxi. 3. In answer to interrogations respecting the sacrifices with which God would be pleased, Micah says,—"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Micah vi. 8.

When the Pharisees murmured against Christ on account of his eating with publicans and sinners, he replied,—"*Go and learn what that meaneth, I will have*"—or *I desire*—"mercy, and not sacrifice." Matt. ix. 13. On another occasion he said to the same complainers,—"*Had ye known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*" Matt. xii. 7.

We are not to suppose that either Samuel, David, Solomon, Hosea, Micah, or the Messiah, meant to speak contemptuously of the instituted sacrifices; but they wished to have it understood, that an obedient heart is what God requires in all external acts of worship, that without this, no service can be acceptable to him, and that where this is found, it is acceptable, whether expressed by external symbols or not.

In the days of Isaiah the people of Israel abounded in sacrifices and offerings; yet God abhorred these sacrifices, and commanded them to “bring no more vain oblations.” As a reason for this, he said to them—“Your hands are full of blood.” It appears that they relied on their sacrifices to secure them from God’s anger, while they indulged themselves in works of violence and bloodshed. But God’s threatenings to them at that period fully evince that HE did not regard the multitude of their sacrifices as a substitute for punishment.

As death was the penalty threatened to Adam for disobedience, and as divine mercy suspended the execution of the threatening; is it not probable that God instituted the sacrifice of animals, not merely as typical of the gospel sacrifice, but as symbolical means to keep alive in the minds of men, that their *forfeited lives* were preserved by divine mercy, to give them a space for repentance; and that it was their duty to confess and forsake their sins? The *death* of the animal offered in sacrifice, was adapted to impress the mind of the offerer with the fact, that his own life was forfeited by sin, and that it was his duty to repent; but that the death of the victim was not a substitute for the death of him who presented it, is evident from the fact, that he was still liable to die. It was to him

rather an admonitory symbol, than a substitute for his own death.

Professor Stuart, however, and perhaps millions of others, have entertained a different view of the subject. He says, "God, as the supreme lawgiver and judge of the Jews, did in certain cases remit the penalty of his law as given by Moses, in consequence of a substitute for it."

The supposed substitute was probably the sin-offering. I freely grant that God promised forgiveness to those who presented the sin-offering according to his requirement; and I have no doubt that multitudes obtained forgiveness in consequence of obedience to the command of God. But an important question here occurs:—Does God's promise to remit a penalty, or his actually remitting it, "in consequence" of an acceptable sin-offering, prove that offering to be a substitute for punishment? If it does, then whatever God requires as a condition of forgiveness, may be regarded as a substitute for punishment. On this principle a multitude of substitutes for punishment might be mentioned. I shall, however, mention but one—and one which I think is equivalent to the sin-offering required by the Mosaic law.—"If we *confess our sins*, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Surely no stronger language than this can be found connected with the sin-offering. But who will say that confessing sin is a substitute for punishment? The sin-offering, when properly presented, was, I conceive, a confession of sin, and an instituted means for obtaining pardon, and thus preventing punishment; but no more a substitute for punishment, than an oral or mental confession offered with a penitent mind.

* 1 John i. 9.

CHAPTER VII.

Opinions and Concessions of Theological Professors.

Professor Stuart has expressed the following opinions:—

“God is just; therefore he will punish sin; and if we read only the book of nature, must we not say too with Seneca—*Therefore he cannot forgive it?* But revelation discloses his attribute of mercy; and mercy consists essentially in remitting the strict claims of justice, either in whole or in part.—In the agonies of Christ, a personage of such transcendent dignity and glory, we see the terrors of divine justice displayed in the most affecting manner, and are impressively taught what evil is due to sin. In the pardon purchased by his death, we contemplate the riches of divine mercy.” p. 25.

I shall not remark on the account here given of the “book of nature,” except so far as to express my belief, that a due consideration of the long-suffering of God and his innumerable favors to sinners, might naturally excite a hope, that with him there is forgiveness for the penitent,—and that this hope might derive some strength from observing how far vice is connected with misery, and reformation with happiness, in the course of natural providence. But I may seriously ask, Who can see “*riches of divine mercy*” in pardon conferred on the penitent only on the ground that it was “purchased” by the sufferings of an innocent substitute? If such representations were just, would they not evince rather the *poverty*, than “the *riches of divine mercy*?”

The Professor admits that “mercy consists essentially in remitting the claims of strict justice, in whole or in

part." Hence the mercy displayed in pardon must be in proportion as "the claims of strict justice" are remitted. I may then ask, how much is there of mercy in a pardon "*purchased*" by a substitute, who suffers an equivalent to all the demands of the law? In respect to the sinner, the whole of the claims of justice may be remitted; but this does not decide the question as to the degree of mercy displayed by the sovereign; for all that is remitted to the sinner, is supposed to have been required of the substitute, and suffered by him.

But what are "the claims of strict justice?" Does strict justice claim a right to inflict penal evils on the innocent, as a substitute for the punishment due to the guilty? If not, how can the claims of justice be answered by such infliction, "either in whole or in part?"

It will be said, that the Son of God *consented* to suffer as our substitute. But where is the record of such a consent? I know not. Supposing, however, that it could be found, would such a *consent* make it right to inflict the evil on him? Could a father thus derive a right to punish the innocent instead of the guilty son? Or could a king thus derive a right to punish an innocent subject? The answers to these questions must be in the negative. It is an object in every just penal law to distinguish the innocent from the transgressor, by exposing the latter only to be punished. When just and necessary sufferings are inflicted on the transgressor, these sufferings may be said to answer the demands of the law, or the claims of justice; but as neither the law nor justice has any such demands on the innocent, I cannot see how "the claims of strict justice" can be answered, "in whole or in part," by the penal sufferings of an innocent substitute.

Dr. Murdock's Concessions.

Dr. Murdock has made one concession relating to this subject which surprised me. Speaking of the divine law, he says,

“When once a creature becomes a transgressor of its commands or prohibitions, it never is satisfied and never can be, with any thing short of the full execution of the threatened penalty on the transgressor himself. And the same is true of criminal law under human governments. No judge can admit an innocent person to suffer an infamous or capital punishment in place of the person found guilty. If a few rare instances of such a procedure can be gleaned from ancient history, they must be ascribed to the ignorance of the times; for neither distributive justice nor the sound maxims of criminal law will vindicate them.” *Discourse on the Atonement.* pp. 32, 33.

He then mentions the case of Zeleucus, the Locrian lawgiver, whose son, by adultery, had become exposed to the loss of both eyes; and the father wishing to honor the law, and at the same time to favor his son, caused one of his own eyes to be plucked out instead of one of his son's. On this strong case Dr. Murdock remarks—“The father's loss of an eye was not what the law demanded, nor any part of it.” In applying the anecdote, he observes—“And thus, also, the bloody sacrifice of the Mediator was not what the law of God demanded, or could accept, as a legal satisfaction for our sins. All it could do, was to display the feelings of God in regard to his law; and to secure, by the impression it made, the public objects which would be gained by the execution of the law.”

Who could have expected, that a writer possessing such clear views of the barbarity of substituted sufferings under human governments, would have appeared as a public ad-

vocate for such sufferings under the government of God ! If the " few rare instances " of such sufferings among men are to be " ascribed to the *ignorance* of the times " when they happened, can it be doing honor to Jehovah to impute to him such a policy ?

Besides, if the " bloody sacrifice of the Mediator was not what the law required or could accept," what were " the feelings of God in regard to his law," which were displayed by the supposed substituted sufferings ? Was it *possible* for God to show *respect* for his law, by doing what the law did not require, and could not accept ? To honor a law, respect must be shown to its principles as well as to its precepts. If the sovereign himself violates the most important principles of his law, he does it more dishonor than a subject can do by violating its commands. If a law makes no provision for substituted sufferings,—does not require them, and cannot accept them, how can it be honored by such substitution ? May we not then suspect that the doctrine of substituted sufferings, like " the few rare instances " of their occurrence, should be " ascribed to the *ignorance* of the times " in which it had its origin ?

Any being, who has a right to make a penal law, must be supposed to have a right to remit its penalty, in whole or in part, whenever he sees reason for so doing, and on such conditions as in his opinion will have the most salutary influence. But whether any being in the universe can properly be said to have a *right* to transfer a just punishment from the guilty to the innocent, is at least very questionable ; for no being can have a right to do wrong. Considered as an expedient for honoring a law, or for vindicating the honor of a sovereign, what can be less adapted to such purposes than substituted sufferings ? Conduct which

violates the principles of every just law, cannot be made equitable by the *authority* of a sovereign, nor by the *consent* of an innocent sufferer. If God were now standing on the ground of substituted suffering, would it be possible for him to repeat his appeal to the consciences of men—"Are not my ways equal?"

Dr. Murdock has another concession which I shall quote, in the hope that it will excite more candor than is now generally prevalent. Prior to the statement of his own views of the atonement, he observes,

"For the attainment of salvation, it may be sufficient that we know, and believe firmly the simple fact, that there is forgiveness with God for the penitent believer, on account of something which Christ has done or suffered. Not much beyond this have the knowledge and faith of the great body of Christians in every age extended." pp. 6, 7.

It is doubtless desirable to obtain more definite views of the subject than is here supposed to have been possessed by "the great body of Christians." But it is very questionable whether more light than darkness has been thrown on the doctrine by metaphysical reasoners, who have not been contented with the simple manner in which the doctrine is stated in the New Testament.

I may add—if "for the attainment of salvation" more is not necessary than is supposed by Dr. Murdock, how melancholy is the fact, that this affecting subject has been the occasion of so many bitter controversies, and anti-christian censures one of another, among men who have professed to be followers of the Lamb! The defect of temper thus evinced, is, in my view, more dangerous than any defect of mere opinion.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Circumstances of the Crucifixion incompatible with the prevailing Views of the Atonement.

It has long been a prevalent belief, that it was the purpose of God in the sufferings of his Son, to make a striking exhibition of his just displeasure against sin,—of his regard to his holy law, and his inflexible purpose that sin shall not pass unpunished,—and that this was done by inflicting on his Son the penal evils due to the sins of men, or such awful sufferings as were equivalent to the miseries due to our sinful race. It may perhaps be better that I should state the hypothesis in the language of Dr. Murdock. In his “Discourse on the Atonement,” may be seen the following statements.

“The Atonement, to be a proper substitute for the execution of the law, ought to be a public exhibition, and such an exhibition as would impress all the creatures of God with a deep and awful sense of the majesty and sanctity of his law, of the criminality of disobedience to it, and of the holy, unbending rectitude of God, as a moral Governor. And such, according to the text,* the atonement really was.” p. 22. “But how, it may be asked, are these expressed or represented? The answer is, Symbolically.” p. 24. “But I venture to say that this symbol has a natural fitness for its object. Its primary object was not so much to enlighten the understanding, as to impress the feelings of creatures. And the impression to be made was to be universal and deep and lasting as eternity.” p. 26.†

* Rom. iii. 25, 26.

† These passages have not been quoted from any unfriendly feeling towards their author, nor for the purpose of criticism; but merely that I might express the hypothesis to be considered, in the language of one

The "public exhibition" is supposed to have been made nearly 1800 years ago, and principally at the crucifixion of the Messiah. But to me it appears that the circumstances of the crucifixion were totally incompatible with the purpose of such an exhibition. Had it been the purpose of God to make an exhibition of such a kind as has been supposed, would he not by some means have called the attention of spectators to that object, that it might be observed and understood? Had the Messiah understood that such an exhibition was to be made in his sufferings, would he not at least have intimated the fact to his Apostles in his private interview with them, the evening before the crucifixion, while he was so disposed to comfort them and to prepare their minds for the trial that was approaching? Could God have selected a time for the exhibition when all the existing circumstances were adapted to lead the spectators to impute the sufferings of his Son to other causes than a display of divine justice, or displeasure against sin? The Jews, by clamor and menace, had extorted from Pilate the sentence of crucifixion against the Messiah,—and as a malefactor, he was led to the cross and executed. The Jews and the Romans who attended, were well aware that the sufferings of the cross were infamous and excruciating; but it does not appear that they were apprized of any thing unusual in the sufferings of Jesus, either in their nature or their extent, to dis-

who must be supposed to understand the prevailing views of the atonement. The discourse was delivered in 1823, in the chapel of the Theological Institution at Andover, while Dr. Murdock was a Professor; and it was "published by the Students of the Institution." These facts, it is hoped, will preclude all suspicion of intended unfairness in giving the statements of this author as expressive of the popular views of the gospel sacrifice.

tinguish them from the distresses which others endured on the cross—or in the least to indicate, that he was enduring, as a substitute for sinners, miseries equivalent to the sufferings of hell.

To whom then was made the public exhibition of God's avenging justice? The Apostles appear to have been as totally ignorant and unapprized of any such purpose, as were the Roman soldiers or the persecuting Jews. To say, that the exhibition was made to beings of the invisible world, affords me no satisfaction. For whatever may have been the nature or the purposes of the exhibition, it was "for us," "for sinners," that the Messiah laid down his life. *Men* were the beings most deeply interested—the beings to be influenced and reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Angels and other spiritual beings might be witnesses of the tragical scene. But if they were, they have not informed us that they perceived displays of God's anger in the sufferings of his Son; and until they do give us such information, we can have no satisfactory proof that so much as one spectator of the crucifixion had even a suspicion that Christ was suffering as a substitute for a world of sinners. Yet we are told, that "the impression to be made was to be universal!"

There is still another circumstance which demands serious attention. The time supposed to have been chosen by God for "the public exhibition of his justice," was a time when his Son was actually suffering a cruel death by "wicked hands." Shall we then cherish a belief that the Holy One was disposed to conceal necessary displays of punitive justice, under a cloud so horribly *black* as that of Jewish malignity against the Messiah? or that God would so mingle the displays of his justice with the effects of

persecuting malice, as to render it impossible for the witnesses to distinguish the one from the other? "God is love"—and does such an exhibition comport with the purity and benevolence of his character? If the design of the gospel atonement was a display of divine justice, equivalent to the miseries due to the wicked, does it not appear that the circumstances of the exhibition were completely adapted to defeat the whole purpose?

God regards men as rational beings, capable of reasoning on the nature of his conduct. He thus addressed the Israelites—"Come now and let us reason together."—"Are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" He would not have made such appeals to men, had not his conduct been such as their consciences must approve. But for men to perceive the wisdom or the equity of God's conduct in a particular case, it must be of such a nature that wisdom or equity can be perceived by the faculties with which he has endued them. It must not be repugnant to the dictates of that reason by which he has made them accountable beings. To reason and conscience I may then appeal respecting the propriety of what I have said in the preceding paragraphs, on the supposed "public exhibition." But that the subject may be brought down still more to a level with the human understanding, a simile may be proposed; and as our Savior deemed it proper to make use of things pertaining to earthly governments to illustrate truths relating to the kingdom of God, I hope it will not be deemed profane in me to imitate his example.

Let it then be supposed, that a king, renowned for wisdom and benevolence, deems it incumbent on him to make a display of his justice by inflicting on his Son a se-

vere suffering, on account of misconduct on the part of the Son, or on the part of subjects in whose behalf the Son has become interested. For this purpose there must be a "public exhibition," that his justice may be witnessed,—and a deep impression made on all his subjects throughout his dominions. How may it be expected that this wise king will proceed to accomplish a purpose so important? Will he take an opportunity to do it while his son is really suffering excruciating tortures from the hands of wicked men, who are enemies to himself as well as to his son? Will he do it under circumstances which will render it certain, that all the sufferings of his son will be imputed to wicked hands, and that the effects of the father's justice will be unperceived and unsuspected? However reasonable it might be that the son should suffer from his father's justice or displeasure, it is a clear case that there could be no *display* or *manifestation* of this justice under such circumstances. I may further ask, would not the father's conduct in thus *secretly combining* his own operations with those of persecutors, expose him to just reproach, should the fact ever be published? As nothing would be seen or known of the father's justice during the exhibition, should it afterwards be affirmed that the son did on that occasion greatly suffer the effects of his father's displeasure; would it not be said, either that the report is incredible, or that the display of justice was a mere farce, unworthy of the character of a wise king?

Shall we not, then, hesitate to impute to Jehovah an exhibition or a policy, which would certainly be degrading to an earthly sovereign? It has been supposed that there was as clear and as strong a display of God's justice, and of his displeasure against sin, in the sufferings of the Son,

as there would have been in the most perfect execution of the law on transgressors. Yet, on inquiry, has it not been found, that the circumstances of the supposed exhibition were such that we have no evidence that any spectator of the scene ever suspected a display of justice on the occasion? The things exhibited at the crucifixion were these,—the *malignity* of the Jews—the *forbearance* of God—and the unprecedented and unparalleled *meekness* and *forgiving temper* of the sufferer. The supernatural darkness, the earthquake, the rending of rocks and of the veil of the temple, and the opening of the graves, may be regarded as miraculous events, intended for important purposes; but if they are to be regarded as tokens of God's anger, I think few will pretend that God thus displayed anger against his Son as our substitute.

Is it not then truly remarkable, that an hypothesis of a nature so extraordinary, should have acquired such extensive belief, and such long continued popularity—one which has no clear declaration of Scripture to support it—which imputes to God a mode of displaying justice that shocks the human understanding, and would be degrading to a wise king; and all this, while the known circumstances of the case were such, as to render the truth of the doctrine in the highest degree incredible, if not absolutely impossible? It may add to our surprize if we consider, that hundreds and thousands of men, truly eminent for talents, learning, and piety, have been made to believe in the supposed exhibition of justice and substituted sufferings; and also to believe that in that event there was a display not only of punitive justice, but of *wisdom* far surpassing all the wisdom of men and of angels! How often has this exhibition been represented as one of the things which

angels desire to look into, and perhaps the principal object of their inquiry. This opinion, so common, must, I think, have been adopted and entertained, without duly reflecting on the peculiar circumstances of the crucifixion, which were so incompatible with the hypothesis. But after these circumstances shall have been duly considered, I think it will be a matter of wonder on earth, if not in heaven, that such a mode of exhibiting justice was ever ascribed to the *wisdom* of God.

CHAPTER IX.

Vicarious Punishment not a Display of Justice.

IN the preceding chapter I attempted to show, that the circumstances of the crucifixion were incompatible with a *display* of justice in the sufferings of the Messiah. But those circumstances are not the only ground of objection which occurs to my mind. For it appears to me that vicarious punishment is itself incompatible with a display of justice in *any* circumstances, except when it happens to be inflicted by mistake. An upright but fallible judge may be so misinformed and deceived as to inflict deserved punishment on the wrong person, and thus punish the innocent instead of the guilty. In such a case there may have been a display of *intended* justice; for it was not the innocent but the guilty that the judge meant to punish. But what would be thought of a judge in our land who should intentionally cause an innocent person to be executed as a substitute for a felon? Would it not excite a general sentiment of horror throughout the country?

Who does not see a display of injustice on the part of Pilate, in passing the sentence of crucifixion on Jesus, after he had frankly owned that he found nothing in him worthy of death, and "no fault at all." Suppose that Pilate had been arraigned by the emperor to answer for his conduct in condemning one that he viewed as innocent;—and that, in excuse, Pilate had pleaded that he caused Jesus to be crucified as a substitute for Barabbas, or for a hundred malefactors, who had been released on that ground; should we see any approach to justice? Suppose again that Pilate could have said, truly, that Jesus consented to suffer as a substitute for the guilty: could the conduct of Pilate be justified on such ground? If not, how can we see a display of justice on the part of God, if he laid on his Son "the punishment due to us all?"

Punishment is an evil which none but the guilty can deserve. To perceive *justice* in the infliction of a capital punishment, we must perceive *desert* of punishment in the sufferer. When no desert of punishment is perceived, how is it possible to perceive a display of justice in penal sufferings. In reasoning on the equity of providence, Elihu said to Job,—“Surely God will not do wickedly; neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.” Job xxxiv. 12. In what way can a king or a judge more flagrantly “pervert judgment,” than by intentionally punishing the innocent that the guilty may escape, or be acquitted? Yet it is to *men* that it has been supposed God made an exhibition of his justice in the sufferings of his Son? But how was this possible when the very faculties with which God has endued men, lead them to regard such conduct as a perversion of justice, if done by a human magistrate?

Had I proposed such questions fifty years ago, the clergy of New England would have answered—that the sins of the elect were so imputed to Christ that he was “legally guilty” of all their offences. From such a port it might then have seemed pretty straight sailing to vicarious punishment. But as the doctrine of transferred or imputed guilt has been discarded, on what real or even imaginary-ground can the justice of vicarious suffering now be vindicated? If in the view of enlightened men such a procedure is always unjust when adopted by men, can it be to *them* a display of justice when done by their Maker?

Dr. Nathan Strong, in his answer to Dr. Huntington, gave the following view of the design of the atonement. “Christ, according to the will of the Father, and with his own choice, hath by obedience and suffering made a display of certain *moral truths*, which the eternal misery of those who are forgiven was necessary for displaying; so that their misery is not now necessary to the good government of the universe?”

What are the “moral truths,” which are displayed in the just punishment of the wicked? I can think of none more probable than the following: That God abhors *sin*,—that, in his view, sinners *deserve* to be punished,—and that, except they shall repent, they certainly will be punished. For the display of such truths it is supposed that Christ suffered as our substitute. Let us then inquire with impartial minds.

How can punishing the *innocent* express abhorrence of *sin*; or even suggest the idea that God does abhor it at all? Might we not from such a punishment more naturally infer, that God abhors innocence or righteousness?

If we may infer abhorrence of sin from the infliction of penal evils on the innocent, why may we not reverse the rule, and infer abhorrence of virtue from punishment inflicted on the wicked?

How does punishing the innocent prove that in God's view the wicked *deserve* to be punished? Can a parent prove to the guilty members of his family, that, in his view, wicked children *deserve* to be punished, by inflicting their deserts upon one who is known to them all as the unoffending and dutiful son? And what parent would ever think of adopting this method to prove to his children, that the disobedient and impenitent will *certainly* be punished? Should an earthly parent, or a king, adopt such a method for the display of such "moral truths," would he not be either suspected of insanity, or accused of abominable injustice? An affirmative answer must be given to the last question by every enlightened mind; and yet this very policy is ascribed to God!

Before we suffer ourselves to ascribe to God a principle of conduct so manifestly unjust when adopted by men, we ought, it seems to me, to inquire very seriously, whether the passages of Scripture on which the doctrine is said to be founded, are not capable of a fair interpretation more consistent with the common ideas of moral justice which God has impressed on the human mind. To this inquiry I shall proceed, with a cheering hope of being able to show, that the doctrine of substituted punishment is destitute of any support from the oracles of God. In pursuing these inquiries I shall perhaps expose myself to the charge of being prolix, minute, and in some instances repetitional; but I hope my readers will bear in mind the infinite importance of the question to be decided, the multiplicity

and strength of the prepossessions in favor of the popular hypothesis, and the consequent importance of a varied and thorough examination of the subject. I shall be more solicitous to leave "no stone unturned," the turning of which may be necessary to the removal of false impressions relating to the government and the character of God, than to acquire reputation for the conciseness of my statements and illustrations.

CHAPTER X.

The Ransom paid for Sinners.

"EVEN as the Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many." Matt. xx. 28.

"Who gave himself a ransom for all." 1 Tim. ii. 6.

As the word *ransom*, in its primary sense, meant the price paid for the redemption of a slave,—and as it is said, that Christ came to give his life a ransom for many; it has been inferred with wonderful confidence, that his sufferings were a substitute or equivalent for the miseries due to the wicked.

I have no occasion to deny that the word originally meant what has been asserted; but as a ransom primarily meant the price given for the freedom of a slave, any means by which liberty was procured would soon be called a ransom. Then as a further variation from the original meaning, the word would be applied to any *means* by which *deliverance* was effected from any species of *thralldom*, *oppression*, or *calamity*. By a little reflection it may be found that the word is used with all this latitude of

meaning, in common discourse and modern writings, and also in the Bible.

The words *ransomed*, *redeemed*, *purchased*, *bought*, are of similar import, when used in reference to procuring freedom for a slave ; and they are all metaphorically used to denote deliverance, or the means of deliverance, from any evil, whether natural or moral ; or the means of procuring any privileges, temporal or spiritual.

The Rev. Legh Richmond, of England, in his Missionary Sermon, furnishes an example directly to the purpose. In urging the Protestants of that country to liberal exertions for sending the gospel to the heathen, he brought to view what a "host of martyrs" had formerly done and suffered to furnish them with the gospel in its purity. He then said to his audience—"Show that you value the *blessings* which the first Protestants *purchased* for you with their *very lives*."

In the same metaphorical sense, the Israelites, in the Old Testament, are called a " *purchased congregation*," " *the ransomed of the Lord*." So in the New Testament, Christians are represented as a " *purchased inheritance*"—a purchased or " *peculiar people*"—a people whom the Lord " *purchased with his blood*."

In a Result of an Ecclesiastical Council held at Groton, in speaking of the *rights* of the New England churches, the Council say—"rights repeatedly *bought* with blood." This doubtless refers to the blood shed in the wars of our country. With equal propriety they might have said, rights *purchased* with blood—or *ransomed* with blood. Such language has been much used by our countrymen in reference to the privileges supposed to be procured by the revolutionary war. In all countries, similar language

may have been common, and probably was so in the time of the Apostles. There is, therefore, no occasion to suppose that they departed from the customary use of language in speaking of sinners as *bought, ransomed, purchased, or redeemed* by the blood of Christ—meaning that he sacrificed his life for the good of mankind, and that God meant and overruled his sufferings for our deliverance from sin and misery. One thing, however, is to be carefully observed : Christ did not lose his life in attempts to destroy others. His glory did not consist in *fighting* with carnal weapons till he fell in battle ; but in the display of a meek and forgiving temper towards insulting and cruel foes—seeking their good with his dying breath !

It may now be further remarked, that when the word *ransom* is used in its primary sense, it always implies a party to whom the price is paid, as well as a redeemer. Those, therefore, who insist on the primary sense when the word is used in reference to Christ, should be prepared to tell us to whom the ransom was paid. Sinners are represented as being in servitude to *Satan* and also to *sin* ; but it is hoped that no Christian of this age will pretend that it was to either of these that Christ paid a ransom for sinners. Will it then help the matter, to say, that the ransom was paid to God? Not unless we are prepared to impute to God the character of the *slave-holder*, by whom sinners had been kept in bondage. Dr. Murdock has informed us in the Appendix to his Discourse, that there was a time when eminent ministers of the church maintained that the ransom was paid to the devil,*

*“ Thus Justin, Irenæus, Clemens Alex , Tertullian, Origen, Basil, &c. who maintained that the ransom was paid to the devil. Indeed this was the general opinion in the earlier ages. But Gregory Naz., Augustine,

but afterwards the opinion prevailed that it was paid to God. Each of these hypotheses appears to me absurd, if nothing worse; and both may be avoided by only supposing that the Apostles used such language in its common and figurative sense, to express the means by which men have been delivered from existing or impending evils—or by which they obtained important privileges.

The Israelites were once in bondage to Pharaoh, and were ransomed by Jehovah. Now what ransom did God give for the redemption of this multitude of slaves? At what price were they “purchased” or “bought.” The fact is, God gave Pharaoh and many of his people as a ransom for the Israelites. “I gave Egypt for thy ransom,” said God to his chosen people. Isaiah xliii. 3. In this sense of the word any means by which deliverance from evil is effected, may be called a ransom. By great sufferings brought on Egypt, God ransomed Israel from slavery. In these sufferings there was indeed a display of divine displeasure: but they were not a substitute for the punishment due to the Israelites. Hence the word, as used in reference to our Lord, affords no proof that his sufferings were a substitute for the punishment due to those for

Athanasius, and Ambrose, held that the ransom was paid to God: a sentiment which was generally held by the schoolmen.” App. p. 41.

It is not easy to decide which of these hypotheses is the more absurd, or the more pernicious. The latter, however, might lead to the idea that the atonement was designed to appease the anger of God: and when the progress of light rendered this idea shocking to reflecting men, a modification would naturally be sought. This might be supposed to be found in the hypothesis, that the justice of God stood in the way of pardon, and rendered substituted suffering necessary. But whether this obviates more difficulties than it involves, is a question not easy to decide.

whose benefit he laid down his life. It proves no more than that the sufferings of Christ were by God made a means for our redemption.

Solomon says—"The wicked shall be a *ransom* for the righteous." Prov. xxi. 18. Did he mean that the sufferings of the wicked were to be a substitute for such sufferings as God might justly inflict on his penitent children? This will hardly be pretended.

It may be true that the word *ransom* originally meant what may be called a *substitute* for the *service* of a slave. But neither the service nor the substitute was of the nature of punishment or penal suffering. May I not then say, that there is *no sense* of the word *ransom*, which can justify the hypothesis that the sufferings of Christ were a substitute for punishment? In this, as well as several other cases, I think it will have been found, that a meaning has been given to words, when used in relation to Christ, which cannot be justified by the use of the same words in any other case in which they occur in the Bible.

CHAPTER XI.

Thoughts on Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

"BEING justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

This passage, more than any other, has been relied on as teaching the doctrine, that the righteousness or justice of God stood in the way of pardoning the penitent sinner, and would have rendered forgiveness impossible, had not the Son of God consented to endure for mankind the desert of their iniquities. Perhaps, however, the meaning of the passage has been misunderstood, and the words may be found capable of a meaning not less important, and more to the honor of the divine character.

Instead of "propitiation," Archbishop Newcome translates, "mercy-seat," and Dr. Macknight "propitiatory." In a note Dr. M. says,—“In allusion to this ancient worship,”—of the Israelites,—“the Apostle represents Christ as the propitiatory or mercy-seat, set forth by God for receiving the worship of men, and dispensing favors.” It then seems that the crucified Messiah, by whose blood the new covenant was ratified, is now the mercy-seat.

This portion of Scripture has long appeared to me to represent that in the death of Christ something was done, some manifestation made, that God might be just in extending pardon to mankind. Such I still believe to have been the fact, but in a different form from what has generally been supposed. Having reflected more on this passage than on any other in the Bible, I shall hazard some thoughts which may possibly lead to a correct interpretation of the Apostle's words.

“The righteousness of God,” when considered as an attribute, is not at variance with mercy; but one which insures that God will always do right in dispensing his favors; or if by righteousness or justice we mean a rule by which God regulates his own conduct; this rule may be said to require of him such displays of benevolence as are adapt-

ed to reconcile sinners to himself, and to forbid whatever would be of the nature of approving sin. But in no part of the Bible have I found that the justice of God ever stood in the way of pardoning the *penitent*. Under the Old Testament, God revealed himself as gracious and merciful, long-suffering and ever ready to pardon all who would forsake sin and turn to him with contrite hearts. Yet I believe that the justice of God ever did and ever will stand in the way of pardoning the *impenitent*; for this would be of the nature of approving a sinful character. That this part of the subject may be set in a true light, let the inquiry be made—What is it in the impenitent sinner which renders his character odious in the sight of God, or such as he cannot approve? It is not this, that he *was* an impenitent sinner at some former period of his life, but that he *is now* an impenitent sinner. The fact that he *was* of this character, is not a ground for present disapprobation, if he is now a true penitent, a new creature, not what he was, but what God requires him to be. The same disposition in God which abhorred what he was, approves what he is, so far as he has become a reformed man; and the same justice which stood in the way of forgiveness while he remained an impenitent sinner, now requires that, as a penitent, he should be forgiven. Hence John says,—“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This text clearly teaches that faithfulness and justice, as well as mercy, are displayed in the pardon of sin.

To effect then the reconciliation and cleansing of the sinner, was the one thing needful to be done, that God might be just in justifying him; and this was the great

purpose for which the Messiah was sent into the world—the purpose for which he was “set forth” as a mercy-seat—the purpose of his ministry and example—his life and his death.

When it shall have been considered how clearly Christ’s suffering for us is represented as an expression not merely of *his* love, but of the love of God to mankind, it must appear remarkable, that it ever became a popular doctrine, that the “wrath of God” was displayed in that event, against his Son as our substitute. Especially so, when it shall also have been considered how very few are the passages of Scripture which even *seem* to suggest that idea, and what a multitude of passages may be brought which clearly teach a contrary doctrine. But perhaps my own experience may aid in accounting for such a phenomenon. In regard to the passage under consideration, I suspect the incorrect meaning which has long been given to the words *atonement* or *propitiation*, has had much influence in misleading the minds of men. I am confident it was so with myself. I was educated in the belief that Christ suffered for us “the wrath of God,” and that it was thus that he made atonement or propitiation for our sins. Hence, when I saw either of those words, it suggested the idea of avenging justice, as readily as the word *murder* suggested the idea of violently taking human life. But nothing, as I now conceive, can be farther from the true meaning of atonement or propitiation, than avenging justice or vicarious punishment. The two words are of similar import. To *propitiate* is to reconcile or to make overtures of peace. Hence *propitiation* is a reconciling sacrifice. *Propitiatory* is something adapted to reconcile or intended for that purpose—

something *on* which, *from* which, *in* which, *by* which, or *through* which, overtures of peace are made. Hence the Apostle represents Christ as “set forth” as a propitiatory or mercy-seat, *in*, *from*, or *through* which, God might manifest his righteous and merciful disposition towards men, by doing what love could do to reconcile sinners to himself—and to cleanse them from their sins. If we read the passage under review with such a meaning to the word *propitiatory* or *propitiation*, how little is seen in it of avenging justice! Indeed what do we behold in it but unmingled displays of reconciling and forgiving love?

It will perhaps be said, that the advocates for vicarious punishment admit that propitiation means a reconciling sacrifice. This may be true; but they attach to that meaning the “wrath of God,” endured by Christ as our substitute—which, in my opinion, no more belongs to the word *propitiation*, than it does to the word *mercy*, or *mercy-seat*. What has wrath or avenging justice to do with making pacific overtures, or reconciling sacrifices?

The preceding paragraphs of this chapter have been written without calling in question the correctness of the common belief in regard to the meaning of the phrase, “*his righteousness*,” meaning the righteousness of God, which twice occurs in the controverted passage. My aim has been to show, that, even admitting the phrase to mean the attribute of righteousness in the divine character, the text does not teach that the righteousness of God stood in the way of pardoning the penitent, so as to render vicarious suffering necessary to salvation. The subject will be further discussed in the next chapter, and a further attempt will be made to show, that the meaning of the passage has been greatly misapprehended.

CHAPTER XII.

The Propitiatory—and the Righteousness of God—or After Thoughts on Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

THE import of the passage—which was the subject of inquiry in the preceding chapter, depends much on the meaning of the word that has been variously translated “propitiation,” “propitiatory,” and “mercy-seat,” and the meaning of the phrase “the righteousness of God,” as used by the Apostle.

As the word variously translated is the same which in the Old Testament is rendered “mercy-seat,” there can be no doubt that it was the Mosaic mercy-seat to which Paul alluded, in representing Christ as having been “set forth” by God as a propitiatory or mercy-seat. We have then to inquire, what was the use of the ancient mercy-seat? After God had directed Moses how to form the mercy-seat, he proceeded to say:—

“Thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee; and there I will meet with thee and commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I shall give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.” *Exod. xxv. 21, 22.*

This passage represents the mercy-seat as a place of God’s special presence—the seat of merciful manifestations—the medium of communication between a holy God and a guilty people;—from which God gave instructions to Moses for the benefit of the sons of Israel.

Another fact deserves notice ; the blood of the sin-offering" was to be "sprinkled on the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat." Directions for this are several times repeated in the 16th chapter of Leviticus.

As the sin-offering was a symbolical confession of sin, the blood was to be "sprinkled *on* the mercy-seat and *before* the mercy-seat." By what symbolical acts could a person express, in a manner more affecting, his reliance on the pardoning mercy of the Lord, who *instituted* and who *occupied* the mercy-seat ?

Is it not then reasonable to believe that Paul meant to teach Christians, that instead of the Mosaic mercy-seat, "God hath set forth" his Son as the gospel mercy-seat, consecrated by his blood ; and that as the former mercy-seat was the medium of communication between God and the Israelites, so is Jesus Christ the medium of intercourse between God and the world ? Through him God manifests his love to men, reveals the purposes of his mercy, his readiness to pardon, and the conditions of forgiveness and salvation. On the other hand, through Jesus Christ we have access to the Father of mercies, and, as disciples of the crucified Messiah, offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God—the sacrifices of broken hearts, confessions of sin, prayers for pardon and other favors, and such obedience to the precepts of the Gospel as is implied in "the righteousness which is by faith." Besides, the "putting away of sin," "cleansing," or "purging" from sin, and thus bringing men near to God, was a great purpose of the exhibition of a mercy-seat as connected with the sin-offering. So this was a special purpose of God's setting forth his Son, as the gospel mercy-seat, and for which Jesus sacrificed his life. Hence we read that

“ he hath appeared once in the end of the world to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself.” Heb. ix. 26. Also “ when he had by himself *purged our sins*, he sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high.” Heb. i. 3. In this last text, what Christ came to effect, is spoken of as accomplished ; because what he had done and suffered, was intended to cleanse us from sin, was adapted to that purpose, and will ultimately have that effect on all who shall obey him.

I may now inquire, what is meant by the phrase, “ the righteousness of God ”—“ God’s righteousness ”—“ his righteousness,” as used by Paul ?

The phrase “ the righteousness of God,” is ambiguous, and may mean the righteousness of God’s own character, or the righteousness which God requires ; as the phrase, “ the works of God,” may mean works which God performs, or works which God requires of men. The phrases to be considered, all meaning the righteousness of God, occur *eleven* times in the New Testament,—*nine* of which are in the writings of Paul, and *five* of them in the chapter which contains the passage in dispute. I shall first present the phrases as they occur in other chapters.

“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and *his righteousness.*” Matth. vi. 33.

“ The wrath of man worketh not *the righteousness of God.*” James i. 20.

“ That we might be made *the righteousness of God* in him.” 2 Cor. 5, 21.

“ For therein ”—that is, the *gospel*—“ is *the righteousness of God* revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Rom. i. 17.

“For being ignorant of *“God’s righteousness,* and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to *the righteousness of God.”* Rom. x. 3.

Baxter, Campbell, Newcome, Macknight, and Adam Clark are agreed, that in these instances, “the righteousness of God” means the righteousness which God requires, “the righteousness which is by faith,” and which God approves for the remission of sins. I may now exhibit the instances in which the phrase occurs five times in the one chapter.

“But if our unrighteousness commend *the righteousness of God,* what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?” Rom. iii. 5.

“But now *the righteousness of God* without the law is manifested.” v. 21.

“Even *the righteousness of God* which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe.” v. 22.

“To declare *his righteousness* for the remission of sins.” v. 25.

“To declare *his righteousness* that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Verse 26.

Of these five instances the first is the only one in regard to which the meaning appears to me at all doubtful. The *righteousness which God requires* seems to be clearly meant in the other four instances. This meaning is intimated in verse 21, by adding the clause “*without the law.*” In verse 22, the meaning is clearly explained—“the righteousness of God *which is by faith.*” No one can reasonably suppose that this explanation is applicable to the attribute of righteousness in God; yet it was meant to

explain what Paul intended by the righteousness of God, as he used the phrase.

The text in which the Savior set the example of using such language, is by Dr. Campbell and Archbishop Newcome translated as follows:—"Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness required by him." Campbell has an important note to justify this translation, in which he gives it as his opinion, that such is the meaning of the phrase in "Rom. iii. 21, 22, and Rom. x. 3." I might quote the opinions of other respectable translators and expositors to the same purpose. But I rely more on Paul's own explanation, than on the opinions of many uninspired writers. In view of his explanation, verse 22, I shall venture to express what I believe to be the principal ideas intended by him in the 24th, 25th, and 26th verses.

"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth as a mercy-seat, consecrated by his own blood; to declare the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins—even the righteousness which is by faith, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

This is not given as a literal translation of the passage, nor as containing all the ideas expressed by Paul in the three verses; but as what I verily believe to be his meaning in those clauses of the passage which have been supposed to suggest, that the righteousness of God stood in the way of pardoning the penitent, till he had inflicted on Christ as our substitute, "the punishment due to our sins." In support of the interpretation which I have given of the passage, and of the phrase "the righteousness of God," I submit the following facts and considerations.

1. When a person has written on a controverted question, if we understand the point in dispute, and the purpose of the writer, we often have a clue to his meaning in the use of an ambiguous word or phrase. Such a clue we have to the meaning of Paul. A dispute had arisen between believing Jews and believing Gentiles on this question:—Whether circumcision and the observance of other Mosaic rituals were necessary to justification? On a question of this nature Paul was writing when he used the phrase, “the righteousness of God.” Now this dispute was obviously one which related to the righteousness which God requires, and *not* to the righteousness of his own character. This with me is a strong reason for believing that I have not misrepresented the meaning of Paul in his use of the ambiguous phrase.

2. When a writer has used an ambiguous phrase, if, to prevent any mistake, he has been so careful as to explain the sense in which he used it, we ought not, without obvious necessity, to impute to him such carelessness as would be implied in immediately repeating the same phrase in a sense entirely different from what he had explained to be its meaning. But such carelessness or inconsistency has been incautiously imputed to Paul by the popular mode of explaining the passage under review. This I shall attempt clearly to show by transcribing from the beginning of verse 21 to the end of verse 26. I shall make no change from the common version, except that of using the phrase “the righteousness of God” instead of “his righteousness,” in the 25th and 26th verses. As all admit, that in these verses “the righteousness of God” is meant by “his righteousness,” there can be no danger of misrepresenting the Apostle’s meaning by substituting the former phrase for the latter.

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare the righteousness of God for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, the righteousness of God, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”

It may be proper here to remark, that the several parts of this passage are so closely connected, that the whole is pointed as composing but one sentence. Such is the fact not only in the common Bible, but in the translations of Newcome and Macknight. The phrase “the righteousness of God,” in this one sentence, occurs four times. The second time it occurs, a clear explanation is given of its meaning, as used by Paul. Now who will venture to assert that, in this very passage, between the explanation and the close of the sentence, Paul twice used the phrase in a sense entirely different from what he had explained to be its meaning? What author of the present day would be willing that others should impute to him such negligence or inconsistency? And what doctrine cannot be proved by the Bible, if such latitude of interpretation be admissible?

3. The 25th verse, on which much reliance has been placed for the support of the popular theory, clearly suggests the idea, that by “the righteousness of God” the Apostle meant the righteousness which God requires of men for the remission of sins—“To declare his righteousness for

the remission of sins." John the Baptist preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." The Apostles preached that men should "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." But what inspired teacher ever preached the personal righteousness of God for the remission of sins, or as the condition of forgiveness? Those who have believed that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers as the only ground of their pardon and acceptance, have indeed come near to preaching the personal righteousness of God for the remission of sins. But their authority for so preaching, I have not found in the Bible.

It will here probably be said, that the righteousness which God caused to be declared, was not merely "for the remission of sins," but "that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." To this it may be replied, that it was for the purpose of the sinner's pardon and salvation that God set forth his Son to declare the righteousness which he requires for the remission of sins; and if he has proposed righteous terms of forgiveness, a compliance with those terms, on the part of the sinner, renders it "just" in God to justify or pardon his offences. As impenitency renders it just in God to *punish*, so repentance renders it just in him to *forgive*.

4. It appears to me an undeniable fact, that God did set forth his Son as a mercy-seat, to declare the righteousness which he requires for the remission of sins. What, I may ask, is the Sermon on the Mount, but a solemn, lucid, and impressive declaration of the righteousness which God requires of men under the light of the gospel? How careful was Christ in that sermon to correct the false opinions of the pharisaical Jews, and to show his hearers

that except their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they would be excluded from the kingdom of heaven! How careful to have it understood that the commands and prohibitions of the moral law extend to the heart, as well as to external conduct! How clearly, too, did he show what temper of heart we must possess to be "blessed,"—to be *forgiven*,—to be the "children" of our Father who is in heaven! In other discourses he illustrated similar truths. Nor did he fail to declare by his own example the righteousness which God requires—by exhibiting in his own conduct the spirit of benevolence, meekness, forbearance, self-denial, and forgiveness, calling on others to learn of him, to take up the cross and follow his steps.

"Whom God hath *set forth*." If "set forth" means exhibited or announced, how clearly was Christ "set forth" on the day of his baptism, or induction to office, when the spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descended and abode on him, and "lo, a voice came from heaven," proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

That Jesus regarded himself as "set forth" in the manner and for the purpose which has been suggested, may appear at least probable from what he said soon after in a synagogue at Nazareth—appropriating to himself the following prediction of Isaiah:—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."—

After reading the passage to the people, Jesus said—
 “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

At the transfiguration, Christ was again “set forth” by the voice from Heaven:—“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” At this time the following imperative words were subjoined: “HEAR YE HIM.” This was done in the presence of three chosen witnesses, who were also Apostles, and who were enabled to confirm their testimony by miracles performed in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I may add, Christ was “set forth” and “approved by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did by him,” in the most public manner, in the presence of many thousands of witnesses. To these works, Christ repeatedly appealed during his ministry as attestation to the truth that he came in his Father’s name; and that the Father was with him and in him. See John v. 36, x. 25, xiv. 10, 11.

In view of all these facts, who can deny that Jesus was “set forth to declare” the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins? And is not this view of his being “set forth” much more probable and more to the honor of God, than the hypothesis that, at the crucifixion, God took an opportunity, unperceived by any human spectator, to inflict on his suffering Son the most dreadful displays of avenging justice, as a substitute for the punishment due to our sinful race?

As Jesus was thus “set forth to declare,” in a more perfect manner than ever it had been done before, the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins; *faith* in him as the promised Messiah was certainly of transcendent importance. For without thus believing on him as the Light of the world, men could not feel their

obligations to obey his precepts and confide in his messages of love. But the faith which he required was not a barren assent to the truth, that Jesus is the Messiah; it was such a cordial and practical belief in him as the anointed Son of the living God, as would dispose men to become his disciples indeed, to obey his commands, to take up the cross and follow his example. Hence the "righteousness which is by faith of Christ," or "faith in Christ," is that *holy obedience* to his precepts, which naturally results from love to his character, and a cordial reliance on him as one invested with divine authority to proclaim to men the glad-tidings of salvation, and the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins. "Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," because it was an obedient faith, which disposed him to do what God required. So faith in Christ is reckoned to Christians for righteousness, when it is a faith which works by love and purifies the heart.

I partially admitted some doubt as to the meaning of the phrase, "the righteousness of God," as used in verse 5. I did this from deference to the opinions of several respectable writers, who agree, that in this case, the phrase is used in a sense different from its more common meaning in the New Testament. But on further reflection, I see no ground for their hypothesis. For "our unrighteousness may commend the righteousness," which God requires, as well as the righteousness of his own character. The fact, that "all have sinned," was with Paul a reason for making "no difference" between Jews and Gentiles, as to their need of the gospel method of justification by faith in Christ. On this very ground, "our unrighteousness may commend the righteousness" which God requires, as it shows this righteousness to be essential to our salvation.

I have assigned four reasons for believing that it was the righteousness which God requires, that Paul meant by "his righteousness," in verses 25 and 26. 1. It was a dispute about the righteousness which God requires, that occasioned Paul to use the phrase, "the righteousness of God." 2. He explained the meaning to be "the righteousness which is by faith in Christ." 3. It was a righteousness "for the remission of sins," which he represents Christ as set forth to declare. 4. It is certain that Christ was set forth to declare the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins. I think these reasons will not be denied, and cannot be invalidated. Therefore, unless the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins, stood in the way of forgiveness, the passage under review affords not the shadow of support to the doctrine of substituted punishment.

I cannot, however, close this chapter without remarking on the contrast which is presented by the different modes of interpreting the phrase, "the righteousness of God," or "his righteousness," as used by Paul in the controverted passage. According to the popular explanation of the phrase in verses 25 and 26, "the righteousness which is by faith" is supposed to consist in reliance on a vicarious punishment for the remission of sins. On the other interpretation, "the righteousness which is by faith," is supposed to consist in humble obedience to the moral precepts of Jesus Christ, in which God declared by him the righteousness which he requires for the remission of sins—such obedience as results from cordially believing in Jesus as the promised Messiah and the Light of the world.

It hence becomes a serious question, whether reliance on vicarious suffering for the remission of sin, is equiva-

lent to *doing the will of the Father*, as declared by the Son in his Sermon on the Mount, and in other discourses recorded by the evangelists? Should any one doubt my correctness in supposing that the Sermon on the Mount was a declaration of the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins, I would entreat him to read the sermon again, with an impartial desire to know what *is* its character and what *was* its purpose, and whether it is not adapted to the very purpose for which I have supposed it to have been delivered. I would request particular attention to the two last paragraphs of the sermon. If calling Christ "*Lord, Lord,*" avails nothing, except we *do the will of his Father*,—if *hearing* his sayings or precepts and *doing them* is like building a house on a rock, a firm foundation,—and if *hearing* his sayings and *not doing them* is like the conduct of "a foolish man who built his house on the sand," and thus exposed it to be ruined by an approaching storm and flood; what better evidence can we desire that Christ had been declaring the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins, and the salvation of the soul?

Let it not, however, be imagined that I am disposed to retort the censures of those who have represented a belief in vicarious punishment as essential to the faith of a Christian. Candor requires me to say, that when a reliance on a supposed vicarious sacrifice leads a person to obey the precepts of Christ and to imitate his example; these effects are salutary, acceptable to God, and the righteousness which he requires for the remission of sins—however incorrect may have been his views of the design of the atoning sacrifice. "Where there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not

according to that he hath not." But when reliance on the supposed vicarious suffering renders a person indifferent or negligent in regard to obeying the moral precepts of the gospel; this reliance, in my opinion, is pernicious in its effects, and tends to the ruin rather than the salvation of the soul.

I may also express my belief, that *good people* who have been in the habit of regarding the atoning sacrifice as a substitute for punishment, have been really under a mistake in supposing that they "rely solely" on such a sacrifice for pardon and acceptance with God; and that, in point of fact, they do habitually and practically regard obedience to the moral precepts of Christ as *essential* to peace of conscience, to the approbation of God, and to the forgiveness of their sins. But in regard to others, who do in fact "rely solely" on a vicarious sacrifice, and hence esteem personal obedience as of no account in respect to pardon; it is my opinion that the reproof of Samuel to Saul, with little variation, is truly applicable to them: "Hath the Lord as great delight in" *a reliance on vicarious suffering*, "as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than" *reliance on* "sacrifice, and to hearken, than" *any faith which worketh not by love.*

N. B. Since writing this chapter, I have observed that Peter used the phrase, "the righteousness of God," in the first verse of his Second Epistle. He thus addressed the Christians to whom he wrote—"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." He might use the phrase to denote God's *faithfulness* to his promises;

but I think it is more probable that he used it as Paul did, meaning the righteousness which God requires.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Veracity of God in regard to his Threatenings.

It has been supposed that it would have been inconsistent with the veracity of God to forgive the penitent without a vicarious punishment. It may, therefore, be thought incumbent on me to show that this opinion is groundless.

Let it then be observed, that under all the forms of human government a power of pardon is supposed to exist; and this supposed power is exercised without any impeachment of veracity. Why then should it be imagined that free pardon is inconsistent with the veracity of God? "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the threatening to Adam; by which he was informed of evil to which he would be instantly exposed, if he should transgress. Perhaps, however, the meaning was no more than this, that by transgression he would become immediately liable to die, or that the *sentence of death* would be immediately passed upon him; and that he would be constantly liable to the execution of the sentence. But whatever might be the import of the threatening, Adam was allowed a long space for repentance. May we on such ground impeach the veracity of God? Shall we not rather infer, that in all his threatenings, God reserves to himself the power of pardon?

Some light may, perhaps be obtained from God's language to Jeremiah: "At what time I shall speak concerning a nation or a kingdom, to pluck up or to pull down and to destroy; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Jer. xviii. On this merciful principle God spared the Ninevites who repented at the preaching of Jonah.

That this principle is applicable to individuals as well as to nations, may be inferred from the ancient institution of sacrificial atonements—from the calls of God to individual repentance, and his promises of pardon to the penitent. But does not God say to Ezekiel, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die?"—How then can he pardon without substituted punishment?

If we look at the words just quoted, regardless of their connexion, they would seem to exclude pardon on any ground whatever; for surely nothing is said or intimated in them relating to vicarious sacrifice. But when we examine the words with their connexion in view, they are found to be a declaration, that one shall not die for the sin of another, but every one for his own sin, except he repent. I shall quote the passage as it stands in the Bible:—

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die." Ezek. xviii. 20, 21.

What can be more obvious than that this passage clearly contradicts the doctrine of vicarious punishment, or that of one's dying as a substitute for another! and I do not see that it is possible for words more clearly to express the doctrine of pardon on condition of repentance. The passage also clearly teaches that the principle of divine government, which was declared to Jeremiah respecting divine threatening to nations, is also applicable to individuals; that in both cases the threatenings are so conditional, that if those against whom they are pronounced shall repent, the threatening will not be executed—that in this case God will turn from the evil that he had thought to do unto them, or had threatened. This being a revealed principle of divine government, it precludes all ground for impeaching the divine veracity.

CHAPTER XIV.

The different Senses in which One Person is said to die or suffer for Another.

THE Scriptures exhibit various senses in which one person may die or suffer for another, as will appear from the following passages and remarks.

“Because I said, Lest *I die for her.*” Gen. xxvi. 9. This was Isaac's answer to Abimelech, who questioned him why he called his wife his sister. The meaning obviously is, that he did so through fear that some one would kill him to obtain Rebekah if he called her his wife.

Abraham had adopted the same policy, as he said, "Lest they slay me *for my wife's sake*;" that is, for the sake of obtaining her.

"Would God I had *died for thee*, O Absalom, my son, my son!" 2 Sam. xviii. 33. Thus David expressed his regret that he had not died instead of his wicked son.

"Nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should *die for the people*, and that the whole nation perish not." John xi. 50. These are the words of Caiaphas, respecting our Savior. In the next verse he prophesied that "Jesus should *die for that nation*." It is not supposed that Caiaphas had any idea that Christ would die for that nation, in either of the senses supposed by different sects of Christians. He probably encouraged the putting of Christ to death, thinking, or pretending to think, that if he was suffered to go on making disciples, an insurrection would occur, and bring on the Jews the vengeance of the Roman government.

In 2 Chron. xxv. 3, 4, we are told, that when Amaziah became king, "he slew his servants who had killed his father. But he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law of Moses,—The fathers shall not die for the children; neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin." The law referred to is Deut. xxiv. 16. The same principle is repeated Ezekiel xviii. 20.

It is obvious that in these passages the meaning is, that one person shall not be killed or punished for the sin of another. For one to die for another in this sense is a very different thing from what was intended in any of the preceding cases. Let it then be remembered that it was an established principle in the divine law, that one should not be punished for the sin of another.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.” John xv. 13. This was the language of Christ to his disciples.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us.” Rom. v. 6, 7, 8.

On this passage I may remark,

1. There is such a thing as one’s dying “*for a good man* ;” that is, probably, to save the life of a good man, or good persons. In this sense we may suppose that Peter said to our Lord, “I will lay down my life for thy sake.” Though he failed in the hour of trial, yet in what he said, he doubtless meant to express the strength of his affection for Christ. In the same sense, Paul says of Priscilla and Aquila—“who *for my life* laid down their own necks.” Rom. xvi. 4.

2. In the passage under consideration it is not intimated that the sufferings of Christ were any greater, or of a different nature, than if he had suffered the death of the cross for good men. Nothing is mentioned as evincing the greatness of Divine love in that event, but the *unworthiness* of the objects for whom Christ died, and his own *worthiness* or *dignity* :—“While *we* were yet *sinner*s, CHRIST died *for us*.”

3. We should observe that it was the greatness of God’s *love* towards *sinner*s—not the greatness of his *anger*, that was commended to us in the death of his Son.

A similar view of the sufferings of Christ is given by him Matt. xx. 27, 28 : “Whosoever will be chief among

you, let him be your minister, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." By a "*minister*" is here meant a *servant*; and Christ would have his Apostles display the same mind that was in himself, and be ready to do or to suffer any thing by which the good of others might be promoted.

In John *Tenth*, Jesus exhibited a contrast between the hireling and the true shepherd. The hireling was one who would flee when he saw the wolf coming, but the good shepherd would expose or lay down his life *for the sheep*. In verse 15, he said plainly, "I lay down my life *for the sheep*."

As Christ laid down his life for us, John infers,—“We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.” On this principle, the Apostles and early Christians exposed themselves to persecution, suffering, and death, to promote the cause for which Christ came into the world and sacrificed his life. He suffered as the Captain of our Salvation, and was made perfect through suffering. Several important purposes were answered by his death, which were not to be effected by the sufferings of his Apostles. Still the ultimate purpose was the same in both cases—the salvation of sinners.

The Apostles, who, like their Lord, were obedient unto death, are represented as dying for their brethren, as suffering for Christ, and even as being killed for God's sake. That the sufferings of the Apostles were of a nature similar to those of Christ, may appear from what was said by Christ, by Paul, and by Peter.

When the sons of Zebedee presented to our Lord their ambitious request, to sit one on his right hand and the

other on his left, he, in his reply, asked, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said unto him, We can. Jesus then said to them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal, shall ye be baptized." Mark x. 38-40.

It is admitted by interpreters, that by the "cup" and the "baptism," are here intended the sufferings of Christ. What then can be a more legitimate inference, than that the sufferings of Christ, and the sufferings of the Apostles, were similar in their nature? If his sufferings were occasioned by displays of God's anger, why not theirs?

The following passages from Paul's writings are worthy of regard.

—"heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ, if so be, that we *suffer with him*, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. viii. 17.

"For as the *sufferings of Christ abound in us*, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ; whether we be afflicted, *it is for your consolation and salvation*," &c. 2 Cor. i. 5, 6.

"I am crucified with Christ." Gal. ii. 20.

"That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." Phil. iii. 10.

"Who now rejoice in my *sufferings for you*, and fill up that which is behind of the *afflictions of Christ* in my flesh, *for his body's sake* which is the Church." Col. i. 24.

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. For if we be dead with

him, we shall also live with him ; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." 2 Tim. ii. 10-12.

The Apostle Peter encourages Christians to suffer patiently for well doing by such considerations as the following :—

"For even hereunto are ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." 1 Peter ii. 20, 21.

"For it is better, if the will of the Lord be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing ; for Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." 1 Pet. iv. 1.

Were Christians exhorted to "arm" themselves with a "mind" to suffer the "wrath of God," as substitutes for others? If not, why should we suppose that such was the mind which was in their Lord?

It is next to be shown that the Apostles suffered for Christ.

That they should so suffer was foretold by Christ himself :—

—"and some of you shall they cause to be put to death, and ye shall be hated of all men *for my name's sake.*" Luke xxi. 16, 17.

When Ananias was sent to Paul, Christ said, "I will show him how great things he must suffer *for my name's sake.*" Acts vii. 16.

That Paul regarded his sufferings as not only for his brethren, but for Christ, may appear from the following passages :—

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses *for Christ's sake.*” 2 Cor. xii. 10.

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; for we which live are always delivered unto death *for Jesus' sake.*” 2 Cor. x. 11.

“For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ not only to believe, but to suffer *for his sake.*” Philip. i. 29.

I have now to add, that the Apostles also suffered for God, or for God's sake.

“For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Ps. xlv. 22.

Paul quotes this passage, and applies it to the sufferings which he and others were called to endure,—“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long.” Rom. viii. 16.

From the numerous passages which have been quoted, it is very clear that there are several distinct senses, in which one person may be said to suffer or die for another. The question naturally occurs, In which of these senses did Christ suffer and die for sinners? The prevalent opinion has been, that he suffered and died as a substitute for sinners. But to this hypothesis there are many objections; some of which may be briefly stated.

1. The death which Christ endured for us was natural or temporal death; yet all men, the friends as well as the enemies of Christ, are still liable to natural death. How then could Christ's death be a substitute for ours?

2. If it be said, that he suffered “the wrath of God” as our substitute; why are we still liable to penal sufferings?

3. The hypothesis that God inflicted on the innocent the penal evils due to us, ascribes to God a mode of con-

duct, and a principle of government, which he forbids men to adopt, and which he himself has positively disclaimed.

4. The principle which the hypothesis ascribes to God, is always unjust and cruel when adopted by men.

5. To interpret the phrases, in relation to Christ, "suffered for us" and "died for us," as meaning substituted suffering and death, is to depart from all the analogies of the Bible, in the use of such phrases in relation to other persons; excepting merely the cases which relate to forbidden conduct and a disclaimed principle.

After God had forbidden the Israelites to punish the innocent for the offences of the guilty, and had assured them that this practice did not pertain to his mode of government; is it to be admitted that he adopted this very principle for the display of his justice? If we know in what sense a good shepherd is said to lay down his life for his sheep, we may know in what sense the Lord Jesus laid down his life for us. For he was the good Shepherd, and we were as his sheep gone astray. In seeking our recovery he had to encounter enemies and dangers, and to endure sufferings and death. The object of Christ's mission was the recovery of men from a state of sin and misery, to reconcile them to God that they might become obedient and happy. As in pursuing this benevolent object he exposed himself to suffering and to death, and not only thus exposed himself, but actually suffered and died; it is with perfect propriety, and according to a common use of language said of him that he suffered for us,—died for us,—laid down his life for us. But that his sufferings were not the effects of God's displeasure against him as our substitute, is, to my mind, very clear from the following passages of Scripture:—

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John iii. 16.

“But God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Rom. v. 8.

“He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Rom. viii. 32.

“That he by the GRACE of God should taste death for every man.” Heb. ii. 9.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.” 1 John iv. 10.

I hardly know of any language which could more clearly convey the idea, that both the mission and the sufferings of the Son of God were the fruits of God's love to sinful men. Even in regard to the “propitiation,” or reconciling sacrifice, John says,—“Herein is love!” the love of God, not his “wrath.” It seems to me that the gospel does not exhibit God to us, as such an austere Sovereign, that he cannot forgive even a penitent, without inflicting the deserved evils on an innocent victim; but, as a being who has indeed a father's heart, and is disposed, by tender compassion for his guilty offspring, to do all that wisdom and love shall dictate to reconcile and save them. In the exercise of the purest love, he sent his Son, “not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” Though God well knew that the mission of his Son would cost him his life;—and though the Son was one in whom he was ever well pleased; yet such was his love to us, that he did not withhold this object of his most tender affection, but delivered him up for us all, when this

became necessary to the accomplishment of his benevolent purpose respecting our salvation.

This delightful view of the subject appears to me clearly authorized by the Gospel ; and with great propriety the intelligence of such love may be called good tidings. This view of the subject seems also to accord with God's long-suffering conduct towards Adam and his posterity, subsequent to the fall ; and with the benignity of the Divine character as revealed to Abraham, to Moses, and to the people of Israel,—both by words and symbolical institutions. I may add, that this view of the subject excludes the awful, the painful, and, to me, *unnatural* idea of God's displaying avenging justice on an innocent and holy victim, as necessary to the exercise of forgiving love toward his penitent children. It is presumed that this supposed example of the mode of Divine forgiveness, has never been, and never can be, imitated by any enlightened and benevolent being in the universe. Yet every Christian is required to forgive, as God forgives ! This thought may be further illustrated in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

In what Sense did the Messiah bear the Sins of Many ?

“THE Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”
Isa. liii. 6.

——“For he shall bear their iniquities.” v. 11.

“And he bare the sins of many.” v. 12.

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins.” Heb. ix. 28.

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” 1 Pet. ii. 24.

All these passages are supposed to refer to Jesus Christ. The first of them will be separately considered; and then I shall endeavor to ascertain the meaning of the others.

“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

To one accustomed to regard the atonement by Jesus Christ as a display of God’s anger, this text will naturally be deemed a strong proof of the correctness of that doctrine. But it should be recollected, that the inspired writers were in the habit of regarding God’s hand in all afflictions, by whatever secondary causes or agents they might have been produced. Satan and wicked men were agents in stripping Job of his property, his servants, and his children; yet Job piously eyed the hand of God in these events, and therefore said,—“The Lord gave, and the *Lord hath taken away*.”—“What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” We may therefore say—The Lord laid on Job the iniquities of the Chaldean and Sabeen robbers, who were instruments of his affliction.

Joseph, too, was the subject of great affliction, in being sold for a slave by his envious brethren; and by being cast into prison by the resentment of an impudent mistress. Yet after his exaltation in Egypt, and while his brethren stood trembling before him, lest he should revenge their wrongs—their father being dead; Joseph thus addressed them: “As for you, ye thought evil against me; but *God meant it unto good*, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.” So the sufferings of

the Messiah were according to the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” “though” by wicked hands he was “crucified and slain.” After his exaltation to the right-hand of God, he might have said to the Jewish Sanhedrim, what Joseph said to his brethren,—“As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.” The salvation of sinful men was the purpose of God in both cases. But I see nothing of substituted penal suffering in either case, though in both, one suffered for others.

Prior to exhibiting the passages in which others, besides the Messiah, are represented as bearing iniquities or sins, I may briefly state several senses in which one may be properly said to bear the iniquity of another, or of many others:—

1. A child may be said to bear the sins of his father, when by his father’s dissipation and wickedness, he is caused to suffer poverty and affliction.

2. A good man may bear the sins of the wicked, when he suffers persecution from their hands. In this sense, Christ bore the sins of many; and some Christians believe, that this was the principal idea intended in the prediction: “and he shall bear the sins of many.” This opinion derives some support from the fact, that the conduct of his persecutors was predicted in connexion with the words which have been quoted.

3. A good man may be said to bear the sins of others, when, like Lot, his righteous soul is *grieved* from day to day by their unlawful deeds. Thus too Christ doubtless bore the sins of many.

4. A good man properly bears the sins of others,

when with meekness he endures their insults and revilings, and still exercises towards them the spirit of forbearance and forgiveness. Who will deny that Christ thus bore the sins of many ?

5. A good man may be truly said to bear the sins of others, when, on account of their sins, he is filled with concern for their souls, and not only prays for them, but freely exposes himself to reproach, peril, suffering, and death, that he may recover them from the ways of sin and misery. In this sense, all Christians must own that Christ bore the sins of many.

6. An innocent man may be said to bear the sins of others, if their crimes are imputed to him, and he is caused to suffer in their stead. Such a result may be brought about in different ways. It may occur, by the cruel design and deceptive management of guilty agents. Having committed a capital offence, they may conspire and accuse an innocent person of the crime,—and, by false testimony, cause him to be arrested, tried, convicted, and executed. A similar result may occur by mistake. A murder may be committed under circumstances which fix suspicion on an innocent man, and cause him to be arrested ; the same circumstances may on trial be deemed adequate proof of his guilt ; and thus, while perfectly innocent of the crime laid to his charge, he may be put to death as a malefactor.

There is still another way in which an innocent person may suffer instead of the guilty. For some reasons of sufficient weight in his own mind, an innocent person may offer himself as a substitute for a guilty father, son, or friend ; the offer may be accepted by the government,

and the innocent may suffer the punishment due to the guilty.

We have now a variety of senses in which one may be said to bear the sins of another. But the last case, stated under the last head, illustrates more nearly than any other, the sense in which a vast multitude of Christians have supposed that the Messiah bore the sins of many. We have then to inquire, whether this hypothesis is warranted by a fair comparison of scripture with scripture. Various cases will therefore be brought to view, in which one is represented as bearing the sins or iniquities of another.

First. Under the Mosaic dispensation, Aaron and his sons were appointed to bear the iniquities of the Israelites. Thus said God to Moses : "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it,—*Holiness to the Lord*,—and it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may *bear the iniquity* of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." Exod. xxviii. 36–38.

The priests were also required to eat of "the meat of the sin-offering in the holy place," as being given to them "to *bear the iniquity* of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord." Lev. x. 17.

Now what do we perceive in either of these cases, which has the least appearance of divine anger, punishment, or substituted suffering? Was the anger of God manifested towards Aaron or his sons while they faithfully observed the rituals of his own appointment? Was not the plate of pure gold with the inscription, "*Holiness to the Lord*," a symbol of the purity of heart which God

required of the people in all their acts of worship? Such a symbol of purity, so conspicuously placed on the forehead of the high-priest, was a constant admonition to the people, to beware of iniquity in their offerings; and by *wearing* this monitory symbol, it appears, that Aaron bore the "iniquities of their holy things, that they might be accepted."

In the other case, it appears that by eating the meal of the sin-offering, the priests bore "the iniquity of the congregation." Were not these merciful institutions adapted to make favorable impressions on the minds, both of the priests and the people,—impressions of God's purity, benevolence, and forgiving love,—and of the importance of their reconciliation to a Being who constantly sought their spiritual improvement and happiness?

Secondly. The scape-goat also bore the iniquities of the Israelites: "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel,—putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall *bare* upon him all their *iniquities* into a land not inhabited." Lev. xvi. 21, 22. In this institution, we have symbolical acts performed to denote God's readiness to forgive, or remove from his people all their transgressions, on the most merciful terms,—their humbly confessing their sins. Putting the hands on the head of the goat, and confessing over it the sins of the people, were affecting ceremonies, suited to lead the people to proper reflections on their own guilt, and the mercy of the Lord.

Thirdly. Ezekiel bore the iniquity of the house of Israel, and the house of Judah. As a "sign" unto them, he

was directed to lie a certain number of days on his "left side," and to "lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it." "So," said the Lord to him, "thou shalt *bear the iniquity* of the house of Israel." He was then directed to lie on his "right side," and in like manner "to *bear the iniquity* of the house of Judah." Ezek. iv. 4-6.

These also were symbolical acts, by which, probably, Ezekiel was to admonish the Israelites and Jews of impending calamities. The manner in which he bore their iniquities might well be regarded by them as a call to repentance. But nothing is perceived of substituted sufferings; nothing which even symbolically represented one as bearing the punishment due to another's offences.

Fourthly. Jehovah himself bore the iniquities of his chosen people:—

"Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am *weary to bear them.*" Isa. i. 14.

"So that the Lord could *no longer bear*, because of the evil of your doings." Jer. xlv. 22.

"And about the time of forty years *suffered* he"—or *bore* he,—"*their manners in the wilderness.*" Acts xiii. 18.

A learned English writer* has brought together twelve texts, which in the Hebrew language represent God as *bearing* or having *borne* the iniquities of his people; but which, in the common version of the Bible, are translated as if *to bear* meant *to pardon*. Three of these will be exhibited.

In the prayer of Moses, Exodus xxxii. 32, we read in our version: "Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin," that is, *bear* their sin.

* John Taylor of Norwich.

“The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity,”—*bearing* iniquity. Numb. xiv. 18.

“Who is a God like unto thee, that *pardoneth*”—*bear-eth*—“iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage.” Micah vii. 18.

There are other forms of speech used in the Bible, which express or imply God’s bearing the sins of mankind. *Long-suffering*, if I mistake not, means *long-bearing*, or *long-enduring* ungrateful and disobedient conduct. The idea of God’s *bearing* the iniquities of men, is strongly expressed, Amos ii. 13: “Behold, I am *pressed* under you, *as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.*”

As a benevolent father bears the ungrateful conduct of a child, so God bears the sins of mankind. In this case, it may be presumed that no one will pretend that bearing sin, means bearing punishment, or substituted suffering. Yet God’s bearing our iniquities may be for the same purpose that Christ bore them, that is, to melt our hearts with his kindness, and reconcile us to himself. “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” Rom. ii. 4.

Fifthly. There are instances in which children are said to have borne the iniquities of rebellious or wicked fathers. The second commandment contains the following words: “For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” Two cases are particularly mentioned in the Old Testament, in which the children bore the iniquities of their fathers. While the Israelites were in the wilderness, God thus addressed the fathers of that generation:—“But as for you,

your carcasses, they shall fall in the wilderness ; and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years and bear your whoredoms." Numb. xiv. 32, 33.

After a war with the Babylonians, Jeremiah, in his Lamentations, says :—" Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities." Lam. v. 7.

In these cases the children bore the iniquities of their fathers, not as being *punished* for the sins of their fathers, but as suffering the evil *consequences* of their fathers' wickedness. As children are often brought into distressed and ruinous circumstances, by the ambition, avarice, revenge, or profligacy of their parents ; so it was with the children spoken of in these passages. But they were not punished as guilty of their fathers' sins, nor were their sufferings a substitute for the punishment due to their fathers. For the fathers fell by the displeasure of God, though the children bore their iniquities. In one of the cases, the carcasses of the fathers fell in the wilderness for their rebellion against the Lord. In the other, the fathers fell in a war with Nebuchadnezzar, in which they engaged, contrary to the advice and the warnings of a prophet of the Lord ; in which war, their country was ruined, themselves destroyed, and their children carried into a long captivity.

Sixthly. There is another sense in which some have supposed that children bear the iniquities of their fathers, and which sense is mentioned in the Bible. In the days of Ezekiel, this proverb seems to have been current :—" The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." By this, it seems they meant, that children were *punished* for the sins of their fathers. But God assured them that such was not the fact. On their part, the

case was thus stated :—“Why ! does not the son bear the iniquity of the father ? ” In reply, God positively declared, —“ The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father ; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.” Ezek. xviii. 19, 20.

It is very evident, that the son’s bearing the iniquity of the father is here used in a sense different from what it was by Jeremiah. For had the words been used in the same sense by both prophets, they would have directly contradicted each other. Thousands of children in every age bear the iniquities of their fathers in the sense in which the words are used by Jeremiah. But no child, it is believed, ever bore the sins of his father in the sense in which the words are used in Ezekiel. In other words, thousands suffer in *consequence* of the vile conduct of their fathers ; but no one is *punished* for his father’s transgressions.

Exclusive of the instances which relate to the Messiah, we have now before us a variety of cases in which one is said to bear the iniquities of another. Such language appears to have been used by the inspired writers in different senses on different occasions. But I have not been able to find a single instance in which the language is used in a sense analagous to that which has been given it when used in relation to Christ. The one which approaches the nearest to that sense, is the one which God positively disclaims, as having no place under his government. But even in this case, there are two points in which there is a want of analogy. For it can hardly be supposed, that the complainers in Ezekiel’s time had any idea of substituted sufferings ; or that their sufferings would exempt their fathers from punishment ; and it is very certain that

these complainers never *consented* to suffer the punishment due to the sins of their fathers.

The idea of substituted suffering is essential to the prevalent theory respecting the atonement; and also essential to the hypothesis, that the anger or avenging justice of God was displayed in the sufferings of Christ. But of all the instances which have been brought to view, I think there is not one in which can be discovered the least appearance of substituted suffering; and this circumstance is, in my mind, strong proof, that the nature of Christ's sufferings has been greatly misunderstood; and that the prevalent hypothesis respecting them is incorrect and unwarranted by the Bible.

Had I found on careful inquiry, that the idea of substituted punishment, or penal suffering is *always* implied in one's bearing the sins of another, as the words are used in the Scriptures in respect to others, what would have been thought of my candor and my integrity, if I should still insist that such is *not* the meaning of the words when used in relation to the Messiah? Every reader may answer this question for himself. He may then reverse the supposition, and inquire what should be thought of the candor of a writer who will still affirm that such must be the meaning of the words when used in reference to the Messiah, although they have no such meaning in any other case as used in the Bible?

Should any one be disposed to make the inquiry, whether one's bearing the iniquity of another, ever means what has been supposed when the language is used in reference to the Messiah; let him keep in view that the prevalent hypothesis implies three ideas: 1. That Christ suffered displays of divine anger or avenging justice:

2. That these he suffered as the substitute for sinners :
3. That it was the purpose of these sufferings to exempt those from punishment for whom they were endured. With these ideas in view, I think no impartial inquirer will ever be able to satisfy himself that the words in question were ever used in such a sense by any inspired writer.

There are, however, other passages of Scripture which may afford light on this subject ; some of which I shall now exhibit.

1. It is said of Christ, "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."—"Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." It could be only in a metaphorical sense, that he bore our griefs, our sicknesses, or our sins. Matthew, after recording the many miracles which Jesus performed on a certain occasion, tells us, that these things were done, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet,—Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." If, then, Christ might bear our sicknesses by exercising a benevolent sympathy and his power of healing ; why not bear our sins by benevolent labors and sufferings to redeem us from all iniquity ? I see no more evidence that, in bearing our sins, he bore our punishment, than that in bearing our sicknesses, he suffered all the pains and distresses, of which he relieved others.

2. Not only did Christ bear our infirmities, but Christians are required to bear the infirmities and burdens of each other :—

"We then, who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." Rom. xv. 1. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. vi. 2.

It surely is not by having the infirmities and burdens of others transferred to me, that I am to comply with these exhortations. I am not to become their substitute, but I am to exercise toward them a Christlike sympathy, and do what I can for their relief and comfort.

3. "For consider him that *endured*"—or *bore*—"such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Heb. xii. 3.

How did Christ *bear* or "endure the contradiction of sinners against himself?" In other words, how did he bear the opposition, mockings, revilings, and insults of his persecutors, before and at the time of his crucifixion? Was it by suffering the punishment due to his persecutors? Or did he bear all this by the display of a meek and forgiving temper towards his enemies, and by prayers, labors, and sufferings for their benefit? If the latter was the way in which he bore the contradiction, insults, and cruelties of his persecutors, why not thus "bear the sins of many?"

4. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, *bearing his reproach.*" Heb. xiii. 13.

How are Christians to bear the reproach of their Lord? Is it by having his reproach transferred to them, that he may be relieved from it? Can we bear his reproach in no other way, than by suffering, as he did, the death of a malefactor? If we may truly bear his reproach by being so affected with it as to be willing to do and to suffer whatever may be necessary to advance the cause for which *he* suffered; then he might bear our sins by being so affected with our condition as sinners, as freely to lay down his life for our sakes.

5. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." 2 Cor. iv. 10.

This Paul spoke of himself and his fellow-sufferers in the cause of Christ. By "the dying of the Lord Jesus," is unquestionably meant the sufferings of Christ as "the Captain of our salvation." How then did Paul and his companions, "always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus?" Was it by having the sufferings of Christ transferred to them, so that they were continually enduring the death of the cross? This will hardly be said. By this form of speech some suppose Paul expressed his constant suffering, or exposedness to suffering, and his willingness to suffer in the cause for which the Savior died. This may not be all that the words were meant to imply. They might mean, that the Apostles constantly kept in mind the event of their Lord's death, the objects for which he died, and the temper he displayed under suffering; and that by a consideration of these things they were animated in their work, and excited to patience, fortitude, and perseverance, notwithstanding all the trials and persecutions which they were called to endure.

Of Jesus, it is said, "who *bare* our sins in his own body on the tree."

Of Paul it is said, "Always *bearing* about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

Here let it be remarked, that Christ bore our sins, and Paul bore Christ's sufferings or dying. If then it be the correct mode of interpretation to say, that in bearing our sins, Christ bore the punishment due to us, why must we not say, that in "Always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus," the sufferings of the cross were transferred from Christ to Paul?

Christ suffered for our sake, and Paul suffered for Christ's sake. But in neither case do I perceive any thing like substituted penal suffering. If, however, in bearing our sins, Christ bore our punishment, why is it not just to infer, that in bearing the dying of our Lord, Paul bore over again the "punishment due to us all?"

As there are many cases in which one is represented as bearing or having borne the sins of others, is it not remarkable, that a meaning has been given to the words when applied to Christ, which is essentially different from their meaning in every other case in which they are used in the Bible?

CHAPTER XVI.

The Agony in the Garden not the Effect of God's Anger.

"FATHER, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared an Angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him; and being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." Luke xxii. 42-44.

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death; and was heard, in that he feared." Heb. v. 7.

The agony of our Lord in the garden has occasioned much inquiry and diversity of opinion. The two passages which have been quoted, are supposed to relate to the

same event. Many have believed, that the agony was caused by displays of God's anger against the sufferer, as the substitute for sinners. Those who advocate this hypothesis, suppose, that on any other supposition, our Lord must appear to great disadvantage, compared with other martyrs, some of whom, and even some females, have displayed remarkable fortitude under cruel sufferings, on the rack, or at the stake; yet our Lord could say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Against the hypothesis that the agony was occasioned by the anger of God, several queries and remarks will be submitted.

1. By whom was the Angel sent to strengthen the suffering Savior? Surely he was sent by God, and probably in answer to the prayer of the Son. But would this have been done, had the Son been suffering by his Father's anger?

2. The cause of the agony is not stated; but as the Son was one in whom the Father was *ever well pleased*, the hypothesis that he suffered God's anger, seems to me incongruous and unnatural.

3. While in the body, there is a great diversity in the natural constitutions of persons, as to liability to be distressed in the prospect of great suffering; so great is this diversity, that it is unsafe to judge of the moral character of a person from his apparent firmness or want of firmness on such occasions. Some of the *best* of men, and some of the *worst*, have displayed astonishing fortitude or indifference in respect to sufferings; and some of both classes have been greatly distressed and overwhelmed with grief. Besides, the same person may at different times evince very different feelings in respect to similar evils

and sufferings, according to the different states of his nervous system, or his bodily health.

4. It is to be observed, that the agony of Christ implied nothing inconsistent with the most perfect confidence in God, and entire submission to his will. For while he could say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," he could also say to his Father, "Not my will, but thine be done." Hence we have a proof, that great grief is not incompatible with entire resignation to the will of God.

5. Whatever might be the cause or the causes of the agony, it was but a momentary suffering. For immediately after Christ's return the third time from prayer, Judas appeared with a band of soldiers to arrest him; and who could have displayed more magnanimity and fortitude than Jesus did on that occasion! All he said to Judas, to the band, and afterwards to the Sanhedrim, and to Pilate, evinced the most perfect fortitude and self-possession. So did every thing subsequent to the agony, till he expired on the cross, if we except the short and unexplained exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Is it, then, safe to infer from momentary agonies, the causes of which are to us unknown, that Christ either endured Almighty wrath, or was deficient in fortitude of mind? Such inferences appear to me unwarranted by the circumstances of the case, and highly presumptuous and reprehensible.

6. It should be remembered, that it was the appointment of God, that the Captain of our salvation should be "made perfect through suffering;" and the agony in the garden might be designed to perfect the exhibition of the Son's "obedience unto death." If the agony was occasioned in part by overwhelming views of the suffer-

ings he was about to endure on the cross, these views may have been presented to his mind for the more perfect trial of his confidence and submission. Besides, the agony itself was well adapted to prevent any suspicion that his apparent submission was the fruit of Stoical principles or Stoical feeling; and to teach all his followers to beware of judging unfavorably of the moral characters of men, merely on the ground that they appear susceptible of deep feeling in the prospect of great sufferings. For the Captain of our salvation was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

7. In addition to the prospect of an ignominious and cruel death, there might be other things which greatly contributed to the agony in the garden;—things too, which will remain unknown to men in the present state. There are, however, some things which appear to me not improbable as among the causes of the agony, and which I shall venture to suggest.

It is reasonable to suppose, that Jesus well knew that great things were depending on his obedience unto death; and that, although he possessed miraculous powers, he was "a partaker of flesh and blood," and in "all points" liable to be "tempted like as we are." In the garden, he might have a clear foresight of the malignity and the insults which he was about to experience from his deluded persecutors. What, then, could be more natural, than that he should feel a deep concern, lest by some improper word, or resentful feeling, he should mar the sacrifice which he was about to offer? This concern would naturally be increased, by clear and affecting views of the sinful state of mankind, the miseries to which they were exposed, and from which he had been sent to redeem them.

Another thing deserves our notice :—Jesus had foretold the miseries which were coming on Jerusalem ; and while on his then recent journey to that place, “when he beheld the city, he wept over it,” and uttered an affecting lamentation. Suppose, then, that while in the garden, he had not only a clear view of his approaching crucifixion,—of the blindness and bitterness of his persecutors,—of the obduracy with which they would say to Pilate,—“His blood be on us and on our children,”—but also of the fearful ruin which awaited that people ; how could it be otherwise than that his feeling heart should be filled with the keenest anguish ? If, while at a distance from the city, the sight of it caused him to weep and lament, how exquisite must have been his grief in the garden, if, in his view, his own crucifixion was associated with the sufferings which were soon to be brought on his persecuting countrymen !

That this last conjecture is not destitute of probability, may appear from a striking passage in our Lord’s history, which perhaps deserves more attention than it has hitherto received. After the sentence of death had been passed upon him, and while on his way to the cross, he was followed by “a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry !” Luke xxiii. 27–31.

Here we are called to contemplate the benevolence of our Savior's heart, while on his way to the cross. It is not to be doubted that he felt much on his own account; yet he seems to have had far deeper feelings on account of the miseries which were coming on his unhappy countrymen and country-women. His language to the women, who were weeping and lamenting on his account, was not of the nature of derision, nor of disapprobation, as though he had no occasion for their sympathy, nor as though their weeping for him was improper. But in return for their sympathy for him, he expressed in a feeling manner his sympathy and concern for them and their children; assuring them that however distressing his situation was or might appear to them to be, yet they had still greater reason to be concerned for themselves and their children. His words seem to imply, that the sufferings which were coming on himself were light when compared with those which were coming on the people of Jerusalem.

Now let it be remembered, that Christ's language to the women was uttered after the agony in the garden, and while approaching the place of crucifixion. If, then, the agony in the garden had been the effect of God's anger, and if, on his way to the cross, he was in expectation of feeling such further displays of God's wrath, as would be equivalent to all the miseries which might justly be inflicted on a world of sinners,—or

“A weight of wo, more than whole worlds could bear;”

would he, so situated, have been likely to utter the sympathetic language which he addressed to the weeping “daughters of Jerusalem?” Could he, with propriety, have suggested to them, that they had more cause to weep for themselves and for their children, than for him?

These thoughts relating to the agony are submitted to the candid consideration of my brethren. I do not pretend to *know* the causes of the agony; but I think it may be accounted for in a manner more scriptural, than that of imputing it to God's anger; for, to me, such an imputation is too shocking for words to express.

Before dismissing this subject, it may be proper briefly to answer a question, which has been proposed by a writer of acknowledged respectability. The question is stated as follows:—

“Since he did not suffer on account of any guilt of his own, on what ground can they reconcile his sufferings with the justice of God, who hold that he is not a substitute for sinners?”*

If by Christ's suffering as “a substitute for sinners,” were meant no more than that he actually suffered to save us from sin and suffering, I should readily acquiesce. But, more than this is meant in the common use of the words, and more is unquestionably meant by the writer who proposed the question. The following remarks are therefore submitted in answer to his inquiry.

1. The justice of God is not at variance with his benevolence and mercy; and it seems to be a law of benevolence, that every rational being should be willing to do or to suffer, whatever may be really necessary for the good of the intelligent universe.

2. I have not found in the Bible, nor in the book of Providence, any passage which says, that it would be unjust in God to subject an innocent or even a holy being to temporary suffering, if this be necessary to a wise and

* Professor Stuart's Discourses, p. 12.

benevolent purpose. Besides, a vast amount of suffering is endured by animals, which are not supposed to be either sinners or substitutes for sinners. Yet who ventures to arraign the justice of God on this account?

3. Christ and his Apostles have mentioned various important purposes which were to be answered by his death, all of them having relation to the redemption of sinners, but no one of them importing that he suffered displays of God's anger, as a substitute for sinners.

4. The more benevolent any person is, the more ready he will be to expose himself to perils and sufferings, when this shall appear to him necessary to the salvation of others. After Paul became a Christian, to what perils and sufferings did he voluntarily expose himself for the salvation of sinners! He had indeed been himself a sinner; but he had obtained forgiveness,—and who will suppose that his sufferings as an Apostle, were of the nature of punishment, for the offences which God had graciously forgiven? or that he suffered as a substitute for those who were saved by his ministry? Besides, do not many pious missionaries of the present day, not only hazard their lives, but really suffer much in their benevolent endeavors to do good to others? And do they not, in the scriptural sense of the words, “suffer for well-doing?” If they do, why is not this as inconsistent with the justice of God, as it would have been for Christ to suffer in the same way? Jesus had delight in doing good, in making others happy, and for such “joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame;” and I have no doubt, that many of the missionaries of the present day, imitate the Captain of their salvation, by acting on the same benevolent principle. But I see no occasion for supposing their

missionary sufferings to be of the nature of punishment for their own sins, nor a substitute for the punishment due to others, to "reconcile them with the justice of God." "Blessed are they who suffer for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 10.

There is one passage in the writings of Paul, which I think may be pertinently introduced in this place, as affording a further illustration of my views of the agony in the garden, and also a further answer to the question relating to "the justice of God." In speaking of himself, Paul makes the following most solemn declaration:—

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness, in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3.

As a literal translation of the second verse, Dr. Mac-knight gives the following:—"That I have great grief, and unceasing anguish of heart." Perhaps no other passage can be found in the Bible, more analogous to the accounts given of the agony in the garden. Yet this "anguish of heart" in Paul was occasioned by his deep concern for his "brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh." He perceived their blindness in rejecting the gospel, and probably had an awful view of the miseries which were coming on that nation, according to the prediction of Christ. It was the benevolence of his heart, in view of their condition, that occasioned his anguish. Why should not the Messiah be affected in a similar manner? But who will say that the sufferings of Paul, which he thus feelingly describes, were either a punishment for

his own sins, or a substitute for the punishment due to others? It is presumed that no enlightened Christian will assert either the one or the other. Yet who feels any difficulty as to reconciling these sufferings of this Apostle, "with the justice of God?"*

* The third verse has been translated and explained in different ways; and it has occasioned considerable controversy. In saying, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ," &c. some have supposed, that Paul meant solemnly to declare, that he should be willing to be damned, if that might be the means of saving his brethren. Others suppose, that he meant no more than that he should be willing to be excommunicated from the visible church. Another mode of explaining the passage has recently occurred to my mind, which I shall venture to propose, for the consideration of others; without pretending to any assurance of its correctness.

The same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, says: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being *made a curse for us*. For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Here, being accursed, or "made a curse," means, being subjected to the infamous death of the cross. Is it not, then, probable that Paul had in view, the ignominious death of Christ, when he said, "I could wish that myself were accursed;" and that his meaning was, that he should be willing to suffer the death of the cross, if, by that means, his brethren might become partakers of the blessings of the gospel? If the Greek preposition ἀπό, [*apo*,] which, in our version, is translated *from*, may properly be rendered *like*, or *after*, meaning, *after the example*, I should have little doubt that what I have suggested, is the meaning of the Apostle. Then the verse might read thus: "For I could wish that myself were accursed *like* Christ, or, *after the manner of Christ*, for my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh."

CHAPTER XVII.

Suffering for Well-doing not Punishment.

To regard all the sufferings of the present life as of the nature of punishment is, in my opinion, an error of injurious tendency. The sufferings of men are from various causes, and doubtless for various purposes; and while some suffer "for evil-doing," others "suffer for well-doing." Job's friends mistook his character, by regarding his sufferings as of the nature of punishment. Similar mistakes may have been made by others. To regard the sufferings of the Apostles and early Christians as punishments, seems to me altogether improper, and inconsistent with what is said in the Scriptures respecting them. Equally improper it is, so to regard the sufferings which benevolent men bring on themselves by attempts to reclaim and save the vicious from dangers or calamities, into which their vices have brought them.

I was led to these reflections, by observing what appeared to me a great inaccuracy in the reasoning of Bishop Butler on the mediation of Jesus Christ. He very justly compares the mediation and sufferings of the Messiah, with events which often occur in the course of natural providence. The following are some of his judicious remarks:—

"When, in the daily course of natural providence, it is appointed that innocent people should suffer for the faults of the guilty; this is liable to the very same objection as the instance we are now considering. The infinitely greater importance of that appointment of Christianity,

which is objected against, does not hinder, but it may be, as it plainly is, an appointment of the very same kind with what the world affords us daily examples of."

"Men, by their follies, run themselves into extreme distress,—into difficulties which would be absolutely fatal to them, were it not for the interposition and assistance of others. God commands, by the law of nature, that we afford them this assistance, in many cases, where we cannot do it without very great pains, and labor, and sufferings to ourselves. And we see in what variety of ways one person's sufferings contribute to the relief of another, and how, or by what particular means, this comes to pass, or follows from the constitution and laws of nature, which come under our notice; and being familiarized to it, men are not shocked with it." pp. 416, 417. *Wilson's 2d edition.*

These remarks perfectly accord with what I believe to be true, as to the sense in which Christ suffered for us. The cases are numerous in which good men expose themselves to suffering, in their attempts to benefit, or save the guilty, or vicious. In this sense, one often suffers for another; and the virtuous frequently thus suffer for the guilty. Sometimes, too, the sufferings result from the prejudice, the malignity, and the violence, of the very persons whose happiness the sufferers are seeking. These appear to me as examples of what Peter meant, by suffering "as a Christian," and suffering "for well-doing;" and also what the Messiah meant, by suffering "for righteousness' sake,"—for "his sake," and "for the gospel's sake."

What I regard, as the inaccuracy of Bishop Butler, does not appear in the passages I have quoted, but in what he

says in connexion with them, in which he represents the sufferings that men endure, in their exertions to befriend the guilty, as “vicarious punishments.” The next sentence to the one last quoted, is the following:—“So that the reason of their insisting upon objections of the foregoing kind against the satisfaction of Christ, is either, that they do not consider God’s settled and uniform appointments, as his appointments at all, or else they forget that *vicarious punishment* is a providential appointment of every day’s experience.”

In reference to the same kind of suffering, the Bishop had before said, “*vicarious punishments* may be fit and absolutely necessary.”

There is a sense in which such sufferings may be properly called “*vicarious sufferings*,” as one suffers them for or on account of another, and with a hope to save the other from suffering. But I am not acquainted with any sense, in which such sufferings can with any propriety be called “*vicarious punishments*.” It is remarkable, that so profound and accurate a thinker, should have applied the word *punishment*, to sufferings “for well-doing.” But he had, probably, been long in the habit of speaking of the sufferings of Christ, as of the nature of punishment for our sins. It was his object in writing, to illustrate an analogy between the phenomena of natural providence, and the phenomena of the Christian dispensation. He clearly perceived an analogy between the sufferings which good men have often brought on themselves by their exertions to save the guilty, and the sufferings of the Savior of the world; and to perfect his analogy, he applied to both, the terms “*vicarious punishment*.” He was, I think, correct in supposing, that if the terms are applicable in either case,

they must be in both. Had he excluded the idea of punishment from the sufferings of Christ, he would have had no temptation to apply it to other sufferings for well-doing. Had he omitted it in both cases, his analogy on this point would have been perfect and striking. But after representing the sufferings of Christ as a punishment endured by the innocent, as a substitute for the guilty, he might in vain have sought for any analogy to this in the course of natural providence, had he not resorted to the unwarranted expedient of applying the term *punishment* to sufferings for well-doing.

It is true, that the barbarous usages of war might have furnished many examples, in which military vengeance has been inflicted on those who had no concern in originating the quarrel between the parties,—and on such ground, the party inflicting the evil has professed to have done enough to vindicate his *honor*, and consented to pardon the guilty, or make peace with him. But such facts would have been too shocking to the mind of Bishop Butler, and to other Christians, to be exhibited as analogous to the conduct of God in the sufferings of his Son. Yet, shocking as the idea must be to every reflecting Christian, it may be seriously doubted, whether there be any thing else, in the course of natural providence, more analogous to the hypothesis, that God inflicted on his innocent Son, “the punishment due to us all,” that he might, consistently with his honor, pardon the penitent.

It would not be difficult to show, that later writers than Bishop Butler have also failed of making a proper distinction between punishment and sufferings for well-doing. But instead of this, I shall briefly exhibit further evidence of the importance of making this distinction.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord said to his disciples,—“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Matt. v. 10–12.

Would Christ have thus encouraged men to expose themselves to displays of God’s avenging justice ? Would he have pronounced men “blessed,” who suffer the effects of God’s displeasure ? or would he have called on them to “rejoice” in suffering *punishment* from the hand of their Maker ? No reflecting Christian can, I think, answer these questions in the affirmative ; or, having duly considered the subject, deem it proper to denominate *such* sufferings “vicarious punishments.”

It then becomes a serious question :—Did not the Lord Jesus “suffer for well-doing ?” Was he not “persecuted for righteousness’ sake ?” In his last interview with his disciples, before the crucifixion, he said to them,—“If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you.” “In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Then, in the Revelation, he is represented as saying, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Rev. iii. 21.

After Jesus had given his disciples such powerful encouragements, in his Sermon on the Mount, to suffer for “righteousness’ sake,” he gave them an example of such sufferings, in that “for the joy that was set before him, he

endured the cross, despising the shame." On this ground, Peter encouraged Christians patiently to suffer for well-doing, and said,—“For hereunto are ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” 2 Pet. ii. 21. If, then, it is improper to regard the sufferings of the Apostles and other Christians for righteousness’ sake as vicarious punishments, why not equally improper so to denominate the sufferings of Christ ?

With little variation, I may here repeat the words of Bishop Butler : “The infinitely greater importance of that appointment,” by which the Captain of our salvation suffered, “does not hinder, but it may be, as it plainly is, an appointment of the very same kind as that,” by which others have “suffered for well-doing,” or “for righteousness’ sake.” The Bishop appears to have been fully aware, that these different “appointments,” are of “the same nature.” In this, I cordially acquiesce ; but I cannot agree with him, that such sufferings are “vicarious punishments,” or *punishments* of any kind, in any proper sense of the word.

The hypothesis that Christ did not suffer punishment for us, but suffered for righteousness’ sake, is, in my opinion, so far from diminishing the value of these sufferings, or their efficacy on human salvation, that it enhances their value, sets them in the strongest light, and puts it in our power to understand how they may have their saving influence. This point is, I hope, fairly illustrated in another chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Christ's Views of his own Sufferings.

HAD the Messiah understood that his sufferings were to be a substitute for the punishment due to sinners, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have given some intimation of the fact, either in announcing the objects of his mission,—in predicting his own sufferings,—in his private interview with his Apostles before the crucifixion,—or in what he said of the day of judgment. What, then, are the facts in these cases ?

1. In all that Christ said of the objects of his mission, I have been unable to find a word which has any appearance of intimating that he came to suffer as our substitute. It is true, that in one instance, he said,—“The Son of Man is come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a *ransom* for many.” But the meaning of this has been explained, and, I hope, satisfactorily, in another chapter.

2. In various forms, the Messiah predicted his own sufferings and death ; but in all of them he was silent as to his suffering as a substitute. On one occasion, he predicted his own death, by saying,—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” John iii. 14, 15. Let it, then, be considered, that the brazen serpent was *not* lifted up as an expression of God's anger, but of his saving mercy, and that “*even so*” the Messiah was to be “lifted up,” as an appointed means for the healing of our moral maladies.

In the parable of the vineyard, the Savior foretold, in a very intelligible manner, that his death would be effected by persecutors. The prophets that had been sent to the Jews, he denominated "*servants*," while he took to himself the rank and title of an only Son. Though the Jews had persecuted the prophets, "beating some and killing some;"—yet having one Son, God sent him, saying, "they will reverence my Son." But "they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard." Mark xii. 1-9. How could Christ have more clearly represented that his sufferings would be of a nature similar to the sufferings of the prophets that had been persecuted even unto death. Besides, Jesus was so far from representing that his sufferings would be a substitute for the sufferings of his enemies, that he forewarned them that God would destroy the murderers of his Son.

There is still further evidence that Christ foretold his sufferings, not as effects of God's avenging justice, but as the effects of persecuting malignity. A little before the account of the transfiguration, Matthew says,—“From that time forth Jesus began to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Matt. xvi. 21.

From this passage, it would seem that Matthew here meant to give the substance of what Jesus “from that time forth” communicated to his Apostles respecting the sufferings that he was to endure, and what would be the nature and causes of his death. Mark and Luke both mention this instance of Christ's foretelling his death. Besides this, Luke mentions what the angels said on this subject to the women at the sepulchre of Jesus, after his resurrec-

tion. Perceiving that the object of the women was to see the body of Jesus, the angels said to them,—“He is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying,—The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” Luke xxiv. 6, 7.

Such were the predictions of the Messiah respecting his own sufferings, without any intimation that to the “many things” which he should suffer from “the elders and chief priests,” would be superadded infinitely greater sufferings from the avenging justice of God.

3. With respect to the private interview of Christ with his disciples a little before his death, it may be observed, that it appears to have been his desire not only to instruct them, but to comfort them, and to suggest considerations adapted to fortify their minds, and to prepare them for the awful event which was then at hand. If then he had understood that his sufferings were to be a substitute for the punishment due to the Apostles and all other sinners,—that this was the only ground on which any sinner could be forgiven, and that this doctrine was to be the theme of Apostolic preaching; how natural it must have been for him in that interview to disclose the all-important facts! Surely nothing could have been more natural or more interesting; yet we look in vain to find one idea of this kind, in any part of the interview. I can account for this silence on no other ground, than that Jesus had no such ideas to communicate,—in other words, that he did not understand that his sufferings were to be a substitute for the punishment due to sinners.

4. If the sufferings of Christ were known to him as a substitute for the punishment due to sinners, and the only

ground on which God pardons the penitent, it would be natural to expect to find these essential ideas clearly communicated in what he said of the day of judgment and future retribution. But in all he said on these subjects, I have not found the least allusion to such a doctrine, or such a mode of divine forgiveness. On the contrary, the Messiah, in unequivocal language, represented that men will be rewarded or punished according to their own characters or works. The faithful servant is to be rewarded according to his improvement of the talents committed to his trust. The slothful servant is to be punished for hiding his talent in the earth, or neglecting to improve it. To one class of people, the King or Judge will say,—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” But why this mark of approbation and acceptance? Does the Judge say,—‘For I suffered an equivalent for all the miseries which justice could have inflicted on you, and ye are justified by the imputation of my righteousness?’ Not a word of all this is to be found as uttered by the Judge. But in assigning the reasons for his approbation, he says:—“For I was hungry, and ye gave me food; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye lodged me; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye assisted me; I was in prison, and ye visited me. Then the righteous will answer him,—Lord, when did we see thee hungry, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When did we see thee a stranger, and lodged thee; or naked, and clothed thee? When did we see thee sick or in prison, and visited thee? The King will reply to them,—Verily I say unto you, that inasmuch as ye have done this to any the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matth. xxv. 35-40. *Campbell's translation.*

Is it then to be believed, that the Savior himself would have given such an account of the ground or reasons of our acceptance with God, had he supposed that the penitent can be justified or pardoned only on the ground of substituted sufferings, or the imputation of his righteousness? The followers of Christ are by him encouraged to expect that all their benevolent works will be remembered at the great day, and rewarded by grace. Instead of teaching them that they are to be rewarded only on the ground of what HE has *done* and *suffered* for *them*, he taught that they are to be rewarded according to what *they* shall have *done* and *suffered* for HIM. What they do for his disciples, he accounts as done to himself, and not even the giving a cup of water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, is to fail of a gracious reward. He also pronounces them blessed, who suffer for righteousness' sake, and assures them that great shall be their reward in heaven. Is not this a perfect contrast to much of the preaching of the present day?

CHAPTER XIX.

Apostolic Views of Christ's Sufferings.

IF the Apostles had understood the sufferings of Christ as a substitute for the future punishment of those who obey the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose, that this doctrine would have been clearly stated and urged on the day of pentecost, after they had been so wonderfully filled with

the Spirit of God. The death of Christ was then a recent event ; it was the great topic of conversation and inquiry ; and it was distinctly brought to view in the first sermon of Peter on that occasion, and in the subsequent sermons recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The preachers were very careful to show that Jesus was the Christ, and that his death and resurrection accorded with the ancient predictions respecting the Messiah, and were therefore proofs that Jesus was the person whose coming had been foretold by Moses and other prophets. Had these preachers supposed also that the sufferings of Jesus were a substitute for their own future punishment,—the future punishment of all who should believe on him, and that this was the only ground on which God could pardon any sinner ; is it *possible* that they should have omitted to say a single word on this doctrine, in all their sermons which were put on record ?

The first sermon of Peter had a powerful effect. The hearers were “pricked in their hearts,”—filled with concern, and exclaimed,—“Men and brethren, what shall we do ?” Peter answered,—“*Repent* and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ; and the same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls.” We have, therefore, strong evidence that such views of the atonement as have long been prevalent, were not entertained by the Apostles, and were not necessary to the most salutary effects in preaching the gospel.

We have in the Acts, sketches of a number of Paul's sermons, as well as of Peter's ; and it appears that Paul

was as silent as Peter, respecting the doctrine of substituted sufferings. I do not find that either of them, or any other inspired teacher, ever taught that Christ suffered the *penalty* due to our sins, or an *equivalent* for that penalty. That the Apostles had no such views of the subject, may be further evident from other facts.

More, it is supposed, than twenty-five years after the crucifixion, while on a visit to Jerusalem, Paul was advised by James and the elders to comply with the law relating to the Nazarites, and to "be at charges" with some men who were then under the "vow." James and the elders said to him,—“Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous of the law. And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together, for they will hear that thou art come. Do, therefore, this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; them take and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads, and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself walkest orderly and keepest the law.” Acts xxi. 20–24.

The vow here spoken of, is supposed to be the vow of the Nazarite. The law respecting this vow is recorded in the sixth chapter of the book of Numbers. Various ceremonies were to be performed, and various offerings were required, one of which was the *sin-offering*. With the advice of James and the elders, Paul readily complied.

Let it then be asked, Do not these facts afford reason to believe, that a great mistake has prevailed respecting *sin-offerings* or sacrificial atonements; and a similar mistake in regard to the atonement by Jesus Christ? Had James and the elders regarded the sin-offering as a substitute for penal sufferings, and had they regarded the atonement of Christ as a substitute for the future sufferings of sinners, would they have advised Paul to comply with the law of the Nazarite? Or had Paul viewed the atonement in that light, could he have submitted to their advice? In that view of the atonement by Jesus Christ, would not the sin-offering by Paul have been setting at nought the blood of the covenant?

But if the sacrificial atonements, or sin-offerings, were instituted tokens or symbols of Divine mercy, designed to reconcile men unto God, Paul's presenting a sin-offering on that occasion would imply no disrespect to the greater sacrifice made by the Son of God, any more than offering a contrite confession of sin, or a prayer for pardoning mercy.

Besides, what James and the elders said of the "many thousands of Jews," who believed "that they were all zealous of the law," is still further proof that the Apostles had never taught these believers to regard the sufferings of their Lord as a substitute for the penal sufferings of sinners. As long as they were zealous of their ceremonial law, and had it in their power, they doubtless continued their sacrificial atonements; and these were probably continued till the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Apostles, as well as their Lord, spoke of the future judgment; and like their Master, they taught that "every man shall be rewarded according to his works, whether

they be good or bad." In speaking on this momentous subject, they did not, that I have observed, say a single word which has even the appearance of the doctrine of substituted sufferings, or imputed righteousness, as the ground of pardon and acceptance.

The manner in which the Apostles spoke of the crucifixion is also to be noticed. If the prevalent views of the atonement are correct, the mere sufferings of the cross must have been as nothing, or no more than a drop to the ocean, compared with the infinity of sufferings which Christ endured as our substitute. Yet the supposed superadded sufferings occasioned by the justice and anger of God, are not, I think, so much as alluded to by the Apostles. In two instances, they have indeed mentioned that he bore our sins, or the sins of many. But I think it has been shown, that this phraseology does not imply punishment, or Divine anger. Besides, it was "in his *own body* on the tree," that he is said to have borne our sins. This implies no more than sufferings by crucifixion.

Paul tells us of his preaching Christ crucified, and of his determination not to know any thing among the Corinthians, "save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Had he known that Christ endured for us a species of sufferings infinitely more intense and horrible than those of crucifixion, would he have omitted to mention them? In speaking of Christ to the Philippians he tells us, that "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross.*"

Why did he say, "*even the death of the cross,*" if this were but the shadow of the evils he endured? Why did he not say, in the bold, emphatic language of modern writers, that Christ suffered for us, "the wrath

of God,"—"equivalent to all the horrors and miseries of hell,"—"as great as the endless sufferings of all mankind?" If such were the facts, and such the ground and the only ground on which the penitent can be pardoned, the conduct of the Apostles in uniformly omitting to state it, is to me perfectly inexplicable.

Christ and his Apostles must have had some weighty reason for neglecting to state, explain, and urge the doctrine of vicarious punishment, as the only ground of pardon; and I can think of no reason which appears to me so probable as this,—that they had no belief in such a doctrine. But on the supposition that other reasons may be given for this neglect, still I should think their example in this particular, worthy to be imitated by uninspired men.

CHAPTER XX.

Pre-requisites to Pardon not Substitutes for Punishment.

To seek and to save that which was lost was the great purpose of our Savior's mission. In executing this purpose, he exposed himself to suffering, and sacrificed his life. Hence the pardon and salvation of sinners are often ascribed to his *sufferings*, his *blood*, or his *death*. But such facts are no proof that his sufferings were a substitute for the punishment due to us; for our pardon and salvation are, in a similar manner, ascribed to various other causes or means, which no one can reasonably imagine to have

been substitutes for punishment. Some of these will be exhibited.

1. The gospel ascribes our redemption, pardon, and salvation, to the love, the grace, or the mercy of God. "For God so loved the world," accounts for every thing relating to the salvation of sinners.

2. Our recovery, pardon, and salvation, are as clearly ascribed to the righteousness, the obedience, the resurrection, and the life of Jesus Christ, as they are to his sufferings, his blood, or his death. "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." "So by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life."

3. Our recovery and salvation are ascribed to the influence of the truth, or the word of God, and to the agency of ministers in preaching the gospel. "Born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "But how shall they hear without a preacher?" "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but to them that are saved, it is the power of God." "To the one we are a savor of death unto death, and to the other a savor of life unto life." "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed,"—"and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "For my words, they are spirit, and they are life."

4. Our recovery and salvation are ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit. "It is the spirit that quick-

eneth." "If ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace," &c. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

5. Pardon and salvation are ascribed to the sinner's own agency, in hearing, and obeying the truth,—repenting, or turning from sin to God,—to his faith, or believing,—walking uprightly,—doing justly,—performing acts of beneficence,—confessing [his sins,—forgiving the offences of others,—trusting in God,—hoping in divine mercy, and enduring to the end. Numerous texts might here be quoted to show that pardon and salvation are as really ascribed to the agency of the penitent sinner, as to the sufferings of Christ, or the agency of God. Every thing which has been named from the originating source—the love of God—down to the humble exertions of the believer in Jesus, may be regarded as a pre-requisite to pardon and salvation, but no one of these things as a substitute for punishment. Indeed, the idea of forgiveness seems to me incompatible with that of substituted punishment; and implies that there had been no such substitute. For if the penalty of sin has been endured by a substitute, what remains to be remitted or forgiven?

When we have derived nourishment, strength, and pleasure from eating bread, to what a variety of causes or means may these benefits be ascribed! The goodness of God, the toil of the farmer, the quality of the seed, the fertility of the earth, the influences of the sun and the rain, the exertions and means for reducing the wheat to flour, and for converting the flour into bread; all these

demand grateful notice, and to each, in its proper place, may be ascribed the benefits we derived from the bread. But after the bread was prepared and set before us, had we refused to eat, or had we been unable to eat, the benefits would not have been realized. Hence, to our eating the bread, may also be ascribed the several benefits which we received. But the goodness of God is observable throughout the whole series. He gave to the husbandman all his disposition, power, and skill to labor. He furnished the seed with its vegetative and reproductive qualities. The fertility of the earth was the effect of his wisdom, power, and kindness. He gave to the sun and the rain all their friendly influences. He superintended the various exertions for securing the crop, and for changing the wheat into bread. Nor is this all. He gave us the strength, the health, and the appetite to eat; and after all, his agency and kindness rendered the bread pleasant and useful to us. It is so in regard to the bread of life, and our deriving from it saving benefits. To a great variety of causes and means we may ascribe these benefits; of each we may say, Had it not been for *this*, we should have failed, and perished in our sins. Still in no one of them can I discern a substitute for punishment, but in each I can see the love and mercy of the Lord.

We may, indeed, truly say, that, had it not been for the love of Christ in sacrificing his life for us, we should have failed of salvation. So we may say, Had it not been that "God so loved the world" as to send his Son on the errand of our redemption, there would have been no salvation for us. The saints in heaven may also say, Had we not repented of our sins, we should have perished. If then we may regard the love of Christ, or the sufferings

of Christ, as a substitute for punishment, why may we not also regard the love of God in sending the Son, and the repentance of the sinner, in the light of substitutes for the penalty due to our offences?

It may be worthy of notice, that to no less than nine distinct things, is justification ascribed in the Bible.

1. The grace of God :—"justified freely by his *grace*." Rom. iii. 24.

2. The righteousness of Christ :—"By the *righteousness* of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." Rom. v. 18.

3. The blood of Christ :—"being justified by his *blood*." Rom. v. 9.

4. The resurrection of Christ :—"who was *raised* again for our justification." Rom. iv. 25.

5. The Spirit of God :—"justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the *spirit* of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

6. Faith :—"a man is justified by *faith*." Rom. iii. 28.

7. Obedience or works :—"Ye see how that by *works* a man is justified, and not by faith only." Jam. ii. 24. "The doers of the law shall be justified." Rom. ii. 13.

8. Words :—"For by thy *words* thou shalt be justified." Matth. xii. 37.

9. By the *knowledge* of Christ :—"By his *knowledge* shall my righteous servant justify many." Isa. liii. 11.

The grace of God is the originating cause of the whole. The other seven are pre-requisite means of divine appointment. It, probably, has not been duly considered, to what a variety of causes or means the pardon and salvation of sinners are ascribed in the Scriptures; and as the crucifixion of Christ was an event in which *his* love and the

love of *God* were in the strongest manner displayed, and are accordingly much celebrated in the New Testament; these facts may have contributed to the formation and support of the opinion, that the sufferings of Christ were a substitute for the sufferings due to sinners.

Though the sufferings of Christ were of an importance far transcending those of any of his Apostles or followers; yet others have suffered in the same cause for which our Lord laid down his life. How many and great were the sufferings of Paul, while engaged in promoting the cause of human salvation! It must have been natural for his converts to speak in strong language of his labors and sufferings; and many of them, probably, might ascribe their recovery from a state of paganism and sin, to the labors and sufferings of this Apostle. Besides, how many thousands of every generation, and in various countries, if they could trace the chain of causes and effects, might find the exertions and sufferings of this one Apostle, among the pre-requisites of their own pardon and salvation! But though millions may have thus had occasion to ascribe their recovery from sin, to the labors and sufferings of Paul, no one could properly regard what he did or suffered as a substitute for his punishment. What he did and suffered may indeed have been the occasion or means of *preventing* the future punishment of many, but not a substitute for that evil to any one.

When we assign to the sufferings of Christ their proper place among the pre-requisites to our salvation, there is little danger of estimating their value too high; but when we regard them as a substitute for punishment, what do we less than to make them also a substitute for the *mercy* of God, and the *repentance* of the sinner? I am far from

imputing to the advocates of vicarious suffering, any disposition to rob God of his glory ; but it appears to me, that their theory must greatly eclipse that glory even in respect to their own minds. Who has eyes sufficiently penetrating to look through such "*blackness of darkness,*" as is implied in vicarious punishment, and clearly discern, behind this cloud, the love of a heavenly Father !

CHAPTER XXI.

The Doctrine and Duty of Forgiveness.

"Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," is an important trait of Jehovah's character, as he revealed it to Moses, when he caused his glory to pass before this favored prophet. But the duty of men in respect to forgiving one another, was much less clearly taught by Moses, than it was by the Messiah. In the New Testament, the forgiving love of God is made an example for our imitation ; and our compliance with this duty is made a condition of our obtaining forgiveness. Thus our Savior taught his disciples to pray,—“Our Father—forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” At the close of the form of prayer, Christ enforced the duty of forgiveness, by the most solemn considerations :—“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive your trespasses. But if ye forgive not men

their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Not only are we required to pray that God would forgive us, as we forgive others; but we are required to forgive as God forgives, and as Christ forgives.

"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you,"—or as God, *through* Christ, or *in* Christ, hath forgiven you. Eph. iv. 32.

"If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ hath forgiven you, so also do ye." Col. iii. 13.

We are required to forgive as God forgives; if, then, it be a truth that God "never grants absolute pardons,"—never forgives but on the ground of vicarious suffering; is it not a clear case, that we are required to forgive only on such ground? If it be the glory of God to forgive only on this principle, must it not be our glory to imitate this example? But what good man ever did or ever can imitate this supposed example of God? Savages and other wicked men have avenged wrongs on the innocent, and then made peace with the guilty; but what good man could bear the thought of inflicting evil on the innocent, that he might forgive as God forgives? Or who ever thought of inquiring, whether he had inflicted a vicarious punishment, or made a display of avenging justice, prior to forgiving the offence of a brother, that he might properly pray,—"Forgive, as we forgive?"

What wise and benevolent parent would not shudder at the thought of teaching his children never to forgive wrongs till they had avenged them by inflicting evil on the innocent? What good parent could set before his children an example of forgiveness on this principle? Yet how many

parents, and even ministers, can teach children that such is God's mode of forgiveness !

There is surely an alarming error some where in regard to this momentous subject,—the duty of forgiveness ; and this error should be carefully sought out and corrected. I think that on due inquiry, the doctrine of substituted suffering, as a principle of divine forgiveness, will either be discarded, or that Christians will feel bound to reduce the principle to practice in their mode of forgiving one another. Let no one imagine, that this is an uninteresting subject, or one that may be trifled with ; for we must forgive, as God forgives, or fail of being forgiven.

CHAPTER XXII.

On God's Forgiving for Christ's Sake.

IN the preceding chapter, on quoting the words of Paul as given in the common version,—“forgiving one another, as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you,”—I gave what is supposed to be a more correct translation, as “God *through* Christ,” or “*in* Christ,” hath forgiven you. This, however, I did not because I perceived any incorrectness in the idea that God forgives for Christ's sake. Some, however, conceive that this form of speech seems to imply a reluctance on the part of God to forgive the penitent. To me, it suggests no such idea ; but simply this, a disposition on the part of God to honor the Mediator, in his manner of bestowing pardon on those for whose

benefit the Son had laid down his life. The same idea is, if I mistake not, expressed by John. Referring to Christ, he says,—“ I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.” 1 John ii. 12. To “ forgive for Christ's sake,” seems to me the same as to “ forgive for his name's sake.” I may now inquire, whether the sentiment be at all derogatory to the freeness of the divine mercy.

That God is disposed to honor his Son, it is presumed, no Christian will deny. As the blessings of the new covenant are bestowed through him as the Mediator,—as we are instructed to ask favors in his name, and in his name to give thanks, it appears perfectly congruous, that God should have respect to the honor of the Son in conferring pardon. And, I may ask, is it not analogous to other dispensations of divine mercy ?

God bestows favors in answer to prayer ; but who regards this as inconsistent with free mercy ? He not only bestows favors on the supplicant, but on others in honor of his supplication. Still nothing is perceived incompatible with the most perfect readiness to do good, even to the evil and unthankful.

Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, and God heard his prayers, and bestowed favors in answer to them on a wicked and gainsaying people. Various instances of this kind were rehearsed by Moses to the Israelites, in the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy. Had there been ten righteous men in Sodom, God would have spared the city “ for ten's sake.”

That it is according to God's usual method of governing the world, to show favor to the wicked, from respect to eminently good people who dwell among them, seems

to be implied in the following passages: To Jeremiah, God said,—“Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, my mind could not be towards this people.” Jer. xv. 1. In the days of Ezekiel, when threatening to bring evil on the land, the Lord repeatedly said,—“Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.” Ezek. xiv. 14–20. In cases of such extreme wickedness and provocation, two or three such eminent men were not sufficient to avert impending evils by their prayers. Yet the language of Jehovah on these occasions seems to imply, that in ordinary cases such men might prevail;—that on their account, or in answer to their supplications, judgments might be averted or suspended.

At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus said to his Father,—“I knew that thou hearest me always;” and a little before his crucifixion he uttered the prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, in which he prayed not only for his Apostles, but for all who should become believers in him through their preaching. Why then may we not suppose, that the prayer he then offered, and his prayers as our intercessor in heaven, have had influence in procuring benefits for men in past ages, and in the present age,—and that they will continue to have influence in all ages, even to the end of time?

During a remarkable tempest, when neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and all hope of being saved “had been taken away,” an angel stood by Paul, and said,—“Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.” Acts xxvii. 24. Thus was Paul honored by God, and all the crew saved for his sake.

Now if it be consistent with the perfect government of God, and the freeness of his mercy thus to honor good men, or *goodness* in men, what of an analogous kind may we not expect that he will do to honor his Son, in whom he is ever well pleased. If we consider what honor was conferred on Moses, who "was faithful as a servant," may we not expect, that far greater honor will be conferred on Jesus, "who was faithful as a Son?" As we read in the gospel, so it may be for ever sung in heaven,—“The law came by Moses; but grace and truth by Jesus Christ.”

Perhaps it may be asked, How can we forgive as God does, if he forgives for Christ's sake? I answer, as God has respect to the honor of his Son in forgiving offences, so should we. The honor of the Father and the Son should be regarded by us, in all we do in imitation of their examples, or in obedience to their commands.

In Job xlii. 7, 8, we have a remarkable passage. God is represented as being displeased with Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad, for things they had uttered in their interview with Job. He directed them to take seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to Job and offer a burnt-offering,—assuring them, that Job would pray for them, "for him," said God, "I will accept." What was directed to be done in this case, was doubtless of the nature of an atonement, or a reconciling sacrifice. It evinces God's disposition to forgive, and to regard the prayer of a man of eminent piety. But if the sacrifice had been of the nature of a substitute for punishment, why was the prayer of Job necessary? If a substitute for punishment is at all represented in the case, the prayer of Job seems to have a higher claim to be so regarded than the burnt-offer-

ing. Why may not the same be said of the *prayers* of CHRIST, and the *sufferings* of CHRIST? If God has no pleasure in the death or sufferings of the wicked, he surely could have none in the sufferings of his Son. It must have been the submissive, meek, and forgiving temper, manifested by the Son under his sufferings, which rendered the sacrifice acceptable to God, and not the exquisite torments which the Son endured. It requires a diabolical temper to derive pleasure from the mere sufferings endured by another.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Thoughts on the Efficacy of the Atoning Sacrifice.

Bishop Butler, Dr. Macknight, and Dr. Paley, if I have not misunderstood them, all believed; that the atonement has an important influence on human salvation; but how it has its influence, they professed not to understand. Dr. Magee goes so far as to say,—“I know not, nor does it concern me to know, *in what manner* the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins.” The Christian Observer applauded Dr. Magee for taking this ground. There was a time when my own mind acquiesced in Butler’s decision on this point. But further inquiry and reflection have convinced me, that such decisions have been too hastily made. Suppose a family of undutiful children to be told, that their kind father had made and ratified his will, and that notwithstanding their

past disobedience, he had bequeathed to each of them a large estate. Would it be prudent for one of these children to say,—I believe there will be found a connexion between my father's sealing his will, and my possessing the portion allotted to me ; but “ I know not, nor does it concern me to know, *in what manner* ” that connexion is to be formed? Will not the prudent child, in such a case, carefully inquire, whether the will is not *conditional*, and whether the connexion between the will and his possession of the estate, is not to be formed by something to be done on his own part ; by neglecting which, he may forfeit the legacy, and be for ever poor, notwithstanding all his father's benevolence and care,] to do him good? For similar reasons, it may be highly important for every one to understand, how “ the sacrifice of Christ is connected with forgiveness.”

I am willing to admit, that the atoning sacrifice may have influence on salvation, in ways which are not revealed, and which are of course unknown ; still there may be much revealed on this subject, which has not been duly considered, and which may be of great importance to be understood. I also admit, that it is difficult clearly to explain *the how* of almost any thing which can be named ; but I am now inclined to think, that there is no more difficulty in explaining *how* the atonement has an important influence on the salvation of men, than how facts, truths, or motives, have an effect on the human mind, to change opinion, disposition, and character.

As all the revealed purposes of the Savior's death, stated in chapter third, have respect to the salvation of sinners, so far as these purposes have been accomplished, the sacrifice must have had great influence on human salvation ;

and how it has had that influence may be as clearly understood, as how sowing good seed has influence on the harvest, or how testimony has influence to satisfy the mind of the truth of alleged facts. The proof of a resurrection and future life, furnished by the resurrection of our Lord, must naturally have had an important influence, as it presents powerful motives to seek first the kingdom of God, and to form a character which will insure that the future life will be happy. The ratification of the new covenant by the blood of Christ,—the fulfilment of what had been foretold respecting the death and resurrection of the Messiah,—breaking down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles, and thus extending the blessings of revelation, and the gospel covenant, to the gentile nations, were certainly effects which have had great influence on salvation, and will continue to have to the end of time;—an influence, too, which is capable of being understood and felt by gentile Christians, in every quarter of the world.

I may now proceed further, and observe, that a great object of the atoning sacrifice was, to reconcile sinners unto God. If, then, it can be shown that the sacrifice was adapted to this purpose, and also shown, how reconciliation is connected with forgiveness, it will then be clear, how the sacrifice has influence on salvation.

That the atoning sacrifice was designed to reconcile sinners unto God, is so clearly revealed, that perhaps no denomination of Christians will deny the fact. But how does it appear to be adapted to that end? In reply, I may ask,—Is it not a well known fact, that clear and striking manifestations of kindness and forgiving love, made by the party wronged or injured, are adapted to make on

offenders or enemies deep and favorable impressions? Though the gospel principle of overcoming evil with good has been sadly disregarded by Christians; yet there have been many instances in which acting on this principle has had the most salutary effects, to melt, to disarm, and to reconcile,—effects far more important than those produced by menace and vindictive measures. There have been, indeed, melancholy instances, in which acting on this principle has failed of producing the intended favorable effects. But such failures, perhaps, are often to be imputed to some imprudence in the manner of proceeding on the part of him who adopted the principle, or to gross ignorance, deep-rooted prejudices, or real misapprehensions on the part of those to whom intended kindness was displayed. However, as a general truth, it may be said, that kindness to enemies is adapted to subdue and overcome them, when the kindness is perceived and regarded as flowing from a pure source, not pretended love.

How great, then, must be the effect of the atoning sacrifice, when it shall be clearly understood, properly illustrated, and brought home to the hearts and consciences of men! I have no difficulty in believing what has been so often reported of the success of Moravian missionaries, in preaching Christ crucified to the barbarous nations. It is said, their success has principally resulted from their representations of divine love, as manifested in the sufferings of Christ for guilty men. I am not personally acquainted with the Moravians, nor have I a very perfect knowledge of their views of the gospel sacrifice. I regard them, however, as a people remarkable for their benevolence, simplicity, self-denial, and perseverance. In speaking of the love of God as displayed in the sufferings of Christ,

they would probably represent the subject very much according to the manner of the inspired writers, avoiding such metaphysical speculations, unauthorized assertions, and revolting hypotheses, as tend to shock the understanding, and to diminish the effect of the gospel representations. What, then, could be more adapted to awaken the attention, and melt the heart of barbarians, than the story of divine love, as told by Christ and his Apostles? I am unacquainted with any thing else, in human language, so well adapted to reconcile sinners unto God. But we are to account for the *effects* on this principle, that genuine expressions of love are of a reconciling tendency.

Not only is the story of God's love to his sinful children of a moving and conciliating character, but this circumstance is peculiarly striking, that the sacrifice was made not on the part of those who had offended, to reconcile their sovereign; but on the part of the sovereign, to reconcile his guilty subjects to himself. This circumstance, if properly represented, must be very affecting to a people who had been in the habit of offering sacrifices to appease their angry deities, and who, perhaps, had never heard of such a thing as a sovereign's making pacific overtures to revolted subjects, or of any one's acting on the principle of overcoming evil with good. This view of the subject exhibits the character of God in the most amiable light, and affords strong ground of assurance of his forgiving love. For if "he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!"

Enough, perhaps, has been said, to show that the atoning sacrifice was adapted to produce the intended effect,—*reconciliation*. Should it now be asked, in reference to

the remark of Dr. Magee,—How or “in what manner” is “the sacrifice of Christ connected with the forgiveness of sins?” I answer, by the link, *reconciliation*; and this connexion is established by the promise of God, and by the nature of divine love.

To be reconciled to God, is to be brought into a state of peace and friendship with him; and it implies repentance and love. That promises of pardon are made to the penitent, no one acquainted with the Bible will deny. Thus saith Isaiah,—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Isa. lvi. 7. Such is the gracious language of the Old Testament. After his resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples,—“Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke xxiv. 47, 48. So Peter, in one of his sermons, thus addressed the Jews,—“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Acts v. 30, 31. John, in his First Epistle, says of God,—“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” From these passages, it is evident, that reconciliation or repentance is connected with the forgiveness of sins, by the promises of God, and the purposes of his grace.

It may also be said, that reconciliation is connected with forgiveness by the nature of divine love. So far as

we are acquainted with impartial love, or benevolence in men, it is of a reconciling and forgiving nature. It seeks to reconcile enemies; and this object being effected, forgiveness follows of course. God is love; and love in him is doubtless of the same reconciling and forgiving nature with that which he requires of men and approves in them. Our Savior repeatedly and forcibly enjoined forgiving love in men one towards another. They were required to forgive a brother "not only seven times, but seventy times seven;" and if occasion required, they were to forgive "seven times in a day." The meaning can hardly be less, than that we should be ever of a forgiving mind, and constantly ready to manifest it, as often as we may see evidence of a penitent temper. That God possesses forgiving love in perfection, is strikingly represented in the parable of the prodigal son. Though this son had wasted his substance in riotous living,—had brought himself into a wretched condition, and done much to grieve his father; yet, as soon as the father perceived this prodigal on his return, and even while a great way off, his heart was all compassion; he ran to meet him with as much alacrity, as if the son had ever been obedient. The parables of the lost sheep and lost money, are explained by Christ himself, to represent the joy there is in heaven, when one sinner repents. True love, whether in heaven or on earth, will ever rejoice in the reformation of a sinner; and that love which rejoices in repentance, cannot fail to connect reconciliation with forgiveness. Hence, as the atonement was evidently intended to produce reconciliation, and was adapted to its purpose; and, as reconciliation is so clearly connected with forgiveness by the promises of God, and the nature of love; it is easy to see, how

“the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins,” and that reconciliation is the connecting link in the divine chain. As the order of God to Noah to build an ark was connected with the saving of himself and his family by his *obedience* to the command of God, so the atoning sacrifice is connected with pardon, by the *reconciliation* which the sacrifice was intended to produce.

Another important purpose of the atoning sacrifice is yet to be mentioned, which will further show how it has influence on human salvation:—“Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself unto him who judgeth righteously.” “Forasmuch, then,” says the Apostle, “as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” If there are any Christians who believe that the only purpose of Christ’s death was to exhibit a perfect example under sufferings, I am not of that number. Yet I believe this to have been one purpose of his sufferings, and a purpose, of far greater importance than has been generally supposed by Christians. That example has great influence in forming the human character, is as well known, as that food nourishes and sustains animal life; and I may add, we understand the *how* in the former case, as well as in the latter.

It appears to have been the purpose of God, by his Son, to introduce and establish a religion, distinguished from all other religions, by love to enemies, forbearance under injuries, and a disposition to overcome evil with good. To this end, it might have been important, that the Captain of our salvation should be made perfect through

suffering, and exhibit an example of the temper which was to distinguish his religion, and which all his disciples might safely imitate. Hence we are told, that he "suffered for us, leaving us an example that we might follow his steps." His circumstances were most trying, and his example and his conquest, perfect and complete. We are exhorted to arm ourselves with the same mind, that, under cruel insults and sufferings from our fellow men, we may forbear rendering evil for evil, and do all we can "to overcome evil with good."

In this view of the atoning sacrifice, it is a *test* of character, to which we should bring ourselves under the various trials of life, to ascertain whether indeed we have become reconciled unto God. We may also regard the example of Christ on that occasion, as a *lamp* to direct us how we should conduct under our trials, and to show us when, and how far, we deviate from the path of duty, and from what we ought to be. It is easy to see, that the sacrifice, in such views of it, *may* have, and *must* have an important influence on the salvation of sinners. That it had a salutary influence on the minds of the Apostles and early Christians, can hardly be doubted; for they daily bore "about in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus." His example must naturally have had, not only a *sustaining* influence under their "fiery trials," but a *restraining* influence, to preserve them from rendering evil for evil, and from having any concern in the works of violence, war, or persecution. How vastly important, then, would have been the influence of the atoning sacrifice on human salvation, had the example of Christ been duly regarded by *all* who, since that time, have borne the name of Christians! Hundreds of millions of them would have been

saved from untimely death by war ! And as many, perhaps, saved from the guilt of imbruing their hands in the blood of their brethren ! And how great will be the saving influence of that sacrifice, when it shall be duly understood throughout Christendom, that the example of Christ on the cross was designed to teach all his followers to be like-minded, to exercise the same forbearing and forgiving temper towards *their* enemies, that he did towards *his* ; that it is only by treading in his steps, that Christians can appear as Christians, or overcome evil with good.

But, alas ! how sad have been the effects of believing that the atonement was a display of God's avenging justice, and a substitute for the punishment due to sinners ! How many millions of men have been encouraged by this belief, to indulge a vindictive spirit, and under the symbol of the cross, as their standard, to rush like war-horses into the games of military violence and bloodshed ! No such consequences *ever did*, or *ever can* result from regarding the atonement as an exhibition of that forgiving love, which Christians should ever feel towards their enemies.

If we can perceive how a perfect example under sufferings may aid or dispose a person to cultivate the same mind in himself, that was in our Lord, or such a temper as will prepare him for the society of holy beings in heaven ; we may see how this view of the atoning sacrifice may have an important influence in regard to salvation. But how an atonement made by a display of avenging justice on an innocent substitute, can be connected with forgiveness and salvation, is, I suspect, a secret not revealed, and may, with propriety, be so acknowledged. For myself, I am free to own, that I can see nothing in

such a view of the sacrifice, at all adapted to reconcile the sinner to God, or to fit the soul for heaven.

Thus I have endeavored to show "in what manner the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins;" and that it is by its moral influence on the human mind, and not by an arbitrary decree, or an extrajudicial enactment of God.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Salvation by Jesus Christ a Redemption from Sin.

"BEHOLD the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29.

"When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. i. 3.

These and similar passages of Scripture, have a meaning, which it is of great importance to understand. How then does the Lamb of God take away the sins of the world? or in what sense is it true, that he has "purged our sins?" As it has been a common belief, that Christ, in laying down his life, bore the punishment due to our sins; so it has been supposed, that by "taking away sins," and "purging our sins," the thing principally intended is, that he took away our punishment, by suffering the penalty due to us.

I readily grant, that so far as sin is taken away, the penalty is remitted. But under human governments, it is well known, that a punishment may be remitted, while

there is no discernible change in the temper or character of the felon. Hence, in the minds of men generally, to take away punishment is a very different thing from taking away sin; and as selfish, impenitent men care little about sin, if they can but escape punishment, I think it must naturally have an injurious tendency to represent to them, that Christ has borne their punishment; and that this is what is meant by taking away the sins of the world. It seems not to have been duly considered, how careful the inspired writers were of using language which would import that Christ took away our punishment in any other way than by taking away sin. As specimens of the manner in which those writers spoke on the subject, I have placed two passages at the head of this chapter; and from a multitude of other passages, which might be quoted, I select the following:

“Thou shalt call his name *JESUS*; for he shall *save his people from their sins.*” Matth. i. 21.

“Who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem us from all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus ii. 14. “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, *from your vain conversation*, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth us from all sin.*” 1 John i. 7.

“To *give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins,*” was the purpose for which Christ was exalted to be a “Prince and a Savior.” Acts v. 31.

From these, and many other passages, it is clear, that the primary object of Christ’s mission and sacrifice, was to

redeem men from iniquity,—to effect in them repentance and reformation, and thus fit them for the service and the enjoyment of God. This accords with Peter's language to the Jews :—" Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts iii. 26. It is, then, by turning men from their iniquities, that Christ saves them from punishment; not by enduring punishment as their substitute.

But how does the Savior effect his purpose of turning men from iniquity, or purging them from sin? As sin is a moral disease, it is by moral means that the disease is healed;—by the influence of the purifying religion which he came to establish,—by the efficacy of the truths which he taught,—the precepts which he enjoined,—the motives he has set before us,—by the love and concern which he expressed for us, in laying down his life, and by the example which he gave for our imitation. That divine truth has an influence to cleanse men from sin, and turn them to the Lord, was known under the Old Testament. The Psalmist asks,—“ Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? ” This question he thus answers :—" By taking heed thereto according to thy *word*." Ps. cxix. 9. Christ observed to his disciples,—“ Now ye are clean through the *word* that I have spoken unto you.” Peter thus speaks of the efficacy of divine truth, in connexion with the spirit :—" Seeing ye have *purified your souls in obeying the truth*, through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren—being born again—by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. i. 22, 23.

As sin still abounds in the world, some may ask,—Why did John the Baptist, eighteen hundred years ago, call on

people to "Behold the Lamb of God who *taketh* away the sin of the world,"—as though the thing spoken of was then about to be done? and why did the writer to the Hebrews say,—“when he had *purged our sins*,”—as though the thing had been before that time accomplished? Do not these forms of speech give reason to think, that taking away sin, meant taking away punishment, and that this was done at the crucifixion?

Suppose the people of a certain city to be in a perishing state by the scarcity of food. The king sends his son with this message:—‘Your sovereign has bread enough and to spare; his son will give you directions how you may obtain a ready and ample supply on the most reasonable terms!’ This, surely, would be good news to a starving people; and such a people, on being about to hear the news from the lips of the son, might be called on to “behold the” messenger, who “taketh away” the evil of famine; and after the message had been delivered, and the way of supply made known, any one, speaking of what the son had done, might properly speak as though the wants of the people had been supplied;—and of the inhabitants, as a people who had been *saved* from famine, because relief had been proffered, and it depended on their disposition, whether they would receive it or not. Yet, notwithstanding all the saving kindness of the king and his son, the people would still perish if they should refuse the offered bread. In the language of prophecy, things are often spoken of as done, which are only purposed and foretold; and, in the language of the New Testament, men are sometimes represented as in a pardoned, justified, or saved state, when they have been made acquainted with the gospel; while, perhaps, many

of those of whom such language was used, had not become truly reconciled unto God. Hence, though the sin of the world has not even yet been taken away, there was a propriety in the manner in which John called on the Jews, to "behold the Lamb of God!" for the Messiah was then before him, and had come to establish his purifying religion, and thus to redeem men from their iniquities. The benefits of the Mosaic religion were in a great degree limited to the posterity of Jacob; but the Messiah came to establish a religion, that was to bless all the nations of the earth. Hence, John called on his hearers, to "behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the *sins of the world.*" Accordingly, after the resurrection of Jesus, he commissioned his Apostles to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

So far as the gospel has had its genuine influence on the hearts of men, it has turned them every one from his iniquities; and, in this way, they are saved from future punishment. But nothing that Christ has done or suffered, has abated, in the least, the necessity of repentance and personal holiness, in respect to pardon and salvation. The object of his mission was to "save his people *from* their sins,"—not to save them *in* their sins.

Though it has been a prevalent opinion, that men are naturally too proud to be dependent on the merits of another for their salvation, or to be willing to accept salvation as purchased by the blood of Christ, yet, I verily believe, that it is much more common for men to be too proud to "work out their own salvation," according to the plain requirements of the gospel. Indeed, I suspect, that it is a much more common thing for impenitent men to hope that they shall be saved, in some mysterious way, on

account of what Christ has done or suffered for them, than on account of any thing they ever did or ever mean to do for themselves. How common it has been to teach men to rely solely on what Christ has done and suffered for them; while "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation," speaks another language, "teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus ii. 11-14.

CHAPTER XXV.

Probable Causes of Error relating to the Atonement.

"SURELY he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Isa. liii. 4.

The latter part of this verse is supposed to have been a prediction of the opinions and feelings of the unbelieving Jews relating to the sufferings of their Messiah. He had borne their griefs, and had manifested the most perfect benevolence among them; yet, in their estimation, he was an impostor, and as such "was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Christians, in later times, have supposed,

that he was indeed "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" not however for his own sins, but for the sins of others. On each hypothesis, there was a display of God's anger in the sufferings of the Messiah. Having fully expressed my dissent from this opinion, I shall briefly suggest a few things, which may help to account for the supposed error. This will be done, on a principle more candid than that of imputing the error to wickedness of heart, in all those who have been so unfortunate as to embrace it.

1. In the fiftieth Psalm, God said to the wicked,— "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." These words are, perhaps, more extensively applicable to mankind, than has been generally supposed; particularly to those whose minds have not been illuminated by revelation. It may not be strictly true, that they have thought that God was "*altogether* such an one" as themselves; yet, probably, they have formed their ideas of God's moral character from what each found in himself, or discerned in his fellow-men. In regard to those who have been destitute of the benefits of revelation, it is difficult to conceive on what other ground they would be more likely to form their ideas of the feelings and disposition of God; and, as to the early written revelations which were made to individuals, these, by transmission from one generation to another, would be very likely to become corrupted by association with opinions and conjectures, that had been otherwise derived or formed. Hence, the greater part of the barbarous tribes of men would be likely to conceive of God, if not "*altogether*," yet in many respects, like themselves; excepting, that they would be likely

to ascribe to him a greater share of knowledge and power than they found in themselves, or saw in each other.

2. The influence of education and tradition is known to have very great effect on the minds of men. The opinions of ancestors are often received for truths, with such veneration, as precludes doubt or inquiry respecting their correctness. Frequently, too, gross errors of tradition become associated with doctrines, which are not only true, but very important ; and these traditionary views may often occasion the words of revelation to be misunderstood.

3. Long before the coming of the Messiah, the gentile nations had been in the habit of offering sacrifices to appease or to propitiate their imaginary gods : and human sacrifices were perhaps deemed the most efficacious. Such were, probably, the customs and the views of the heathen ancestors of all the present nations of Christendom, when the gospel was first introduced among them ; and as the gospel made known the fact to them, that the Messiah had suffered as a sacrifice, it would be very natural for these heathen-taught ancestors to suppose, that the sacrifice was made to appease the anger of the God of Israel, and to render him propitious. When, therefore, they avowed themselves Christians, many of them might still retain their former views of sacrifices, and associate them with that of the Lamb of God.

4 From the réproofs of the prophets and of the Messiah himself, it is very certain, that the Jews had greatly perverted the Mosaic institutions ; and it is not improbable that many of them had imbibed the heathen notions of sacrifices, so far as to regard them as means for appeasing God's anger, or as substitutes for punishment, and, per-

haps too, as substitutes for obedience. Similar perversions of the gospel atonement have unquestionably been made by thousands who have borne the Christian name.

5. Revenge, or retaliation of wrongs, was probably a general and popular principle among men, when the Messiah made his appearance in the world. To revenge a wrong was deemed rather a duty than a crime. People thus educated would readily impute vindictive feelings to their gods, and deem it an honor to them to make a display of anger an essential ingredient in an atoning sacrifice.

6. To overcome evil with evil, was the general policy of mankind. This entered into the various forms of government, political, military, ecclesiastical, and even parental; also into the intercourse of individuals, families, and nations. When a wrong or supposed wrong was done, it was deemed laudable for the injured party to assume a stern, menacing, and hostile attitude, and to maintain it till what was deemed satisfaction was obtained, by retaliating the wrong, or effecting some humiliating concession on the part of the offender. For the party injured to be first or forward in making pacific overtures, or to be at great expense to reconcile the offender, and thus avoid a rupture, was a thing probably little known among heathen nations, and might have been deemed improper and mean-spirited by the multitude, especially if the injured party had it in his power to revenge the wrong he had received. Such, it is believed, was the general and the popular policy, though some philosophers might recommend a different course.

7. When Christians were freed from pagan persecution, and exalted to power by the policy of Constantine,

they seem to have gradually abandoned the humble and pacific policy of the gospel, and to have adopted the principles and the policy of the world and of war. This must have greatly bewildered their minds, and have done much to prepare them to regard the atoning sacrifice as a display of divine justice, a substitute for punishment, or a means of appeasing divine anger. All the preceding particulars might have more or less influence in giving popularity to incorrect views of the atonement.

8. The minds of men, being prepossessed by such facts and circumstances, would be prepared to give such a construction to the figurative language of the Bible, as should be most favorable to the received and popular hypothesis. On finding that what are in the Bible called atonements, were, in two or three instances, accompanied with strong manifestations of God's displeasure; it might seem to them, that atonements very naturally meant or implied tokens of avenging justice. They might also observe, that when men were said to bear their own iniquities, marks of divine displeasure were implied, and that when children were represented as bearing the iniquities of their fathers, they were subjected to evil as the *effects* of transgressions committed by their parents. This, to minds leaning that way, might turn the scale, and lead them to suppose, that when Christ is said to have borne the sins of many, the meaning must be, that he was *punished* for their offences. Then the numerous passages in which we read that "Christ suffered for us," and "died for us," would all be interpreted to mean, that he suffered as our substitute. The certainty that such is not the meaning of similar phrases, as used in other cases, and the certainty that God had solemnly disavowed acting on such a princi-

ple as punishing one for the sin of another, might be wholly overlooked, or deemed of little weight, when weighed in the scales against hereditary prepossessions.

The popular views of the atonement have unquestionably impressed the minds of many millions of people with the ideas, that God was originally a very stern, vindictive sovereign ; that the Son was of a disposition very different from the Father, far more tender and compassionate in his feelings towards sinners, and that his name is emphatically the

“ *Dearest* of all the names above ; ”

that this Son, perceiving our miserable condition on account of God’s anger, kindly interposed in our behalf, and engaged to obey the law, and suffer its penalty as our substitute, and our representative. I do not *assert* that the facts and circumstances which have been mentioned, produced these results. They have occurred to me, as the most probable causes of such lamentable effects on the minds of Christians.

The saving and benignant policy of the gospel, as a contrast to that of the world, seems to have been greatly overlooked or misapprehended by Christians in general, of every country. To overcome evil with evil, or to effect subjection by resentment and menace, is not the gospel policy. But to overcome evil with good, is not only the principle on which Christians are required to act, and on which the Messiah acted, but it was the principle on which God sent his Son to be the Savior of the world, and on which, he “ delivered him up for us all.” By overlooking this heavenly policy, men have been led to regard the Messiah, not only as their best friend, but as their repre-

sentative, in his obedience and sufferings. The Messiah, however, was God's representative, not ours, in all he did and all he suffered. He came not to do our will, nor "his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him." The atoning sacrifice was not made on our part, to reconcile God to us; but on the part of God, to reconcile us to himself.

The great sacrifice was therefore made on a principle and for a purpose, directly the reverse of those recognised in the heathen sacrifices. It was made not by the offending party, to reconcile the party injured; but by the injured party, to conciliate offenders. God needed not the sufferings of an innocent victim, to render him propitious. The sacrifices of a broken spirit and contrite heart, with their genuine fruits and expressions, were the sacrifices which he required of men, and with which he was ever well pleased. To produce such sacrifices was, I conceive, the purpose of the Mosaic sacrifices, and of their antitype, the blood of the Lamb of God. As this sacrifice was made on the part of God, so he came *with* his Son, and *in* his Son, to manifest towards us his forgiving love, and his ardent desire for our reconciliation.

As it will not be without pain to myself that the following queries will be proposed, I hope they will be received, and considered with candor. With this hope, I proceed to ask,—Has it not been a common thing with Christians to impute to Jehovah a character too nearly resembling that of a pagan deity, whose anger could not be appeased but by sufferings and blood? Has not the gospel atonement been too commonly regarded as a sacrifice made for a similar purpose to that for which the pagans offered human sacrifices? Has not the general practice of the pagans, in of-

fering sacrifices to propitiate their gods, been often urged by Christian writers as a proof, that there was nothing in the atonement made by the death of Christ, contrary to the light of nature, or the dictates of reason? Has not this, too, been done, without adverting to the fact, that the gospel sacrifice was made on a principle, the reverse of that on which the pagan sacrifices were offered? There surely is not only a conceivable, but a very important difference in the two cases,—a difference which should not be lost sight of by Christians. For when they so lose sight of this distinction, as to represent that the gospel sacrifice and the heathen sacrifices were offered on the same general principle, it seems to me difficult, if not impossible, that any clear views of the love of God, in not sparing his own Son, should be entertained.*

I willingly concede, that the word *atonement* would be applicable to this sacrifice, whether the purpose were to reconcile God to us, or us to God; but the two purpo-

* How then, it may be asked, are we to account for the fact, that the pagans were so universally in the habit of sacrificing to their gods on a principle so opposite to that on which the sacrifice of Christ was offered? Answer:—Let it be supposed, that the offering of sacrifices was originally instituted by God; and for the benevolent purposes which were mentioned in preceding chapters; let it also be supposed, that for many centuries, men had no written records to transmit revelations from one generation to another: can it be more wonderful that the original design of the sacrifices should have been so perverted, as to be regarded as means for appeasing divine anger, or as substitutes for punishment, than that Christians, with the gospel in their hands, should so pervert its principles and precepts, as to make them subordinate and subservient to a persecuting or a war policy? Or that the symbol of the cross on which the Savior died, praying for his enemies, should be converted into a military standard, under which Christians might acquire glory by butchering one another!

ses are very different. The former was the purpose of heathen sacrifices; the latter, the purpose of that made by the Son of God. Let us listen to the language of the Apostle:—"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. How different, and how lamentable are the following ideas, expressed by so good a man as Dr. Watts:—

"Well, the Redeemer's gone,
T' appear before our God;
To sprinkle o'er his burning throne,
With his atoning blood!

No fiery vengeance now,
No burning wrath comes down;
If justice calls for sinners' blood,
The Savior shows his own."

"And quench'd the Father's flaming sword
In his own vital blood."

"The Father lays his vengeance by,
And smiles upon his Son."

"Come let us lift our joyful eyes
Up to the courts above,
And smile to see our Father there,
Upon a throne of love.

Once 't was a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame;
Our God appeared consuming fire,
And vengeance was his name.

Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood,
That calmed his frowning face,
That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And turned the wrath to grace."

What Christian can be duly aware of the implication in these poetical effusions, and not weep that such sentiments are circulated through the land, and impressed on the minds of millions, by all the weight of a character so deservedly esteemed as that of Dr. Watts! Do not some of these sentiments bear a shocking resemblance to those entertained by pagans in sacrificing to their vindictive deities? Is not the gospel atonement here represented as having its principal effect not on minds of sinners who need a moral change, but on the mind of God, who was always love, and with whom there is no variableness nor even a shadow of turning? The change in his mind, by the application of atoning blood, is indeed represented as having been very great,—so great, as to "*quench the Father's flaming sword,*" and "*turn his wrath to grace!*" Did Paul, on his way to Damascus, experience a greater change than this? If the representation be just, what must have been the moral character of God prior to this wonderful conversion? And if the views of Dr. Watts, as represented in these extracts, are correct, does it not follow, that the Lamb of God came rather to take away his Father's anger, than "the sins of the world?" I can hardly forbear shuddering while I write such questions; and I should certainly erase them, were it not deeply impressed on my mind, that the popular views are in a high degree reproachful to God, and injurious to men; and that the time has come, when the subject should be more thoroughly examined, that it may be better understood.

In reply, it may probably be said, that the clergy of New England have already generally discarded such views of the atonement as are contained in the extracts from Dr. Watts. I hope it is even so; but a great portion of the people of our country may be expected to cherish those ideas, as long as they shall be retained in popular hymn-books for public worship and private devotion. If the clergy have become convinced that such views are erroneous and reproachful to God; ought they not to exert their influence to have them excluded from the hymn-books which have their patronage? It surely cannot be a matter of indifference, what views of God we entertain, nor what views we occasion to be entertained in the minds of others.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Peculiar Things said of the Death of Christ.

“Now there is one thing in which there is no difference of opinion at all, which is, that the death of Jesus Christ is spoken of in reference to human salvation, in terms, and in a manner, in which the death of no other person is spoken of besides.” This is the language of Dr. Paley, and I admit its correctness. But while Christians are thus agreed as to the fact asserted, they disagree in their inferences, or in their manner of accounting for what they all admit to be true. A few remarks were made on this point at the close of the third chapter; but more will probably be necessary to satisfy the minds of many pious people. The peculiar things said of the death of Christ, are such as the following:—

“We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” “We are sanctified by the offering of his body once for all.” “He who knew no sin was made sin”—*or a sin-offering*—“for us.” “In whom we have redemption through his blood.” “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.”

Many such things are said relating to the death of Christ, his sufferings, or his blood, which are not applicable to the death of any other person. Hence, some infer, that his sufferings were peculiar in their nature, as well as in their importance,—the effects of divine anger, and a substitute for the punishment due to the sins of men. It will, however, be my aim to show, that these peculiar things may be accounted for by the peculiar dignity and excellence of his character, and the peculiar purposes of his mission and sufferings.

Were there nothing to be taken into view but the peculiar dignity of the Messiah, and the excellence of his character, analogy would lead us to expect that many peculiar things would be found recorded relating to his death. When great dignity is united to uncommon excellence of moral character, and eminent services done for mankind, much will of course be said of the death of him in whose character such things were acknowledged to exist. How much more is said of the death of a great and good king, than of a man of subordinate rank! How much has been said in our country of the death of Washington! Can it then be wonderful that much is said of the death of Jesus, which is not applicable to the death of any other person? It is indeed true, that his official

dignity was not generally understood and acknowledged, by the people among whom he lived and died. But it was acknowledged by the writers of the New Testament. They regarded him as the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed,—as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, the appointed Mediator of the new covenant, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, to whom he gave all power in heaven and earth, making him Head over all things to the church, exalting him with his right hand as a Prince and Savior, and ordaining him as the judge of the living and the dead. Well then might things be said of his death, which are not said of the death of any other being.

But this is not all. Peculiar and extraordinary purposes were to be accomplished by his mission and death,—purposes by which his death was distinguished from that of any one else who ever died. Twelve of these purposes were mentioned in the third chapter of this work. In them, we may probably find enough to account for all that was said by his Apostles of his memorable death. In the following passage we find our Lord explaining to his Apostles, *why* his death and resurrection were necessary.

“These are the words that I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them,—Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke xxiv. 44–47.

As Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, by the introduction and establishment of a purifying religion, adapted to the condition and wants of men of all countries; it must have been of great importance that his claims as the Messiah, the authorized Ambassador of Heaven to men, should be clearly confirmed, prior to his sending forth his Apostles to all nations, to preach the gospel in his name. On this account, before his death, he forewarned his disciples of the event, and assured them, "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning *him*." But it is very certain, that they did not then understand him, or at best but very imperfectly. Hence, after his resurrection, he reminded them of what he had before said, and also "opened their understandings," that they might not fail to understand what had been written concerning him. Among these things, were the important predictions relating to his death and resurrection; and, in Christ's view, it was necessary that these should be fulfilled preparatory to the mission of the Apostles, as his ambassadors to the world, and that, until they were fulfilled, the evidence that he was the Messiah was incomplete. But what was there "written in the law of Moses," relating to the Messiah's death? or in what way was his death predicted in the law of Moses? In my opinion, his death was foretold by the institutions called the passover and sin-offering. The slaying of the lamb, in each of these institutions, was, I conceive, a symbolical prediction of the crucifixion of the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

To those who will carefully inquire, I think it will be evident, that in most of the passages in the New Testa-

ment which contain peculiar things said of the death of Christ, there is an obvious allusion to the Mosaic sacrifices or symbolic predictions. Hence we read, that "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us." "In whom we have redemption through his blood." "As of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Similar allusions may, perhaps, be found in nearly all the passages, which contain peculiar things relating to the death of our Lord.

But there were also things written in the prophets, as well as in the law of Moses, which "*must be fulfilled*," prior to the mission of the Apostles ; such as the following :— "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,"—"he was numbered with the transgressors,"—"he bare the sins of many,"—"and made intercession for the transgressors,"—"was cut off, but not for himself." So clearly do these predictions correspond with the facts of the crucifixion, that unbelievers may suspect that they were written after the events had occurred. Several of these predictions are noticed by the writers of the New Testament as having been fulfilled. What Paul and Peter say of Christ's bearing "our sins," or the "sins of many," was, probably, in allusion to the predictions of Isaiah. These passages, too, are among the peculiar things said of the death of Christ. The things referred to by Christ, "in the Psalms," which "*must be fulfilled*," included the prediction of his resurrection, as well as that of his death. This is particularly brought to view by Peter in his Sermon on the day of pentecost.

Now let it be observed, that after these predictions had been fulfilled, and prior to sending forth his Apostles, Jesus took an opportunity to "open their understand-

ing," that they might know how to apply these prophecies, as proofs that he was indeed the Messiah, the promised Light and Savior of the world. Accordingly, they adopted this course, and in their sermons took particular care to show the Jews, how, that in killing the Prince of life, they had unintentionally fulfilled the predictions respecting him, and contributed to the establishment of his claims as the Messiah.

I may then ask, Do not the several facts which have been exhibited, clearly account for the peculiar things which are said of the death of Christ? and this, too, without any reference to the idea of substituted punishment? As he was a person of peculiar dignity, sent on a peculiar mission, by whose death, peculiar predictions, and purposes were fulfilled,—peculiar things must of course be said in relation to that event. No other being of equal dignity was ever sent on an errand of mercy to our race. The death of no other being was, in such a manner, connected with the salvation of sinners. In the death of no other being was the love of God to men so wonderfully displayed. Not only is it true, that many important predictions were fulfilled in his death; but it is also true, that from the apostacy of man, the course of Providence was preparatory to the death of the Messiah; in that event, the new covenant was ratified by his blood; with that ratification was connected all the good which has since resulted from the promulgation of the gospel, and all that will result to the end of time. Extraordinary then, indeed, must have been the fact, if nothing peculiar had been said of that event, if an importance had not been ascribed to it, which cannot be ascribed to the death of any other being known to mankind.

But let it be observed, and not forgotten, that Jesus did not say,—“Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer,”—that *vicarious punishment* for the remission of sins might be preached in his name, but “that *repentance* and *remission* of sins, should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” This is a circumstance, which surely deserves the serious attention of all ministers of the gospel. As Christ was silent prior to his death in regard to substituted punishment; the same profound silence on this point seems to have been observed by him after his resurrection. But if ever there was a time for teaching this doctrine, when was the time, if not when Jesus was explaining to his disciples, *why* it behoved him to suffer, and *what* they were to preach to all nations in his name? If it was the purpose of his death, that substituted punishment should be preached in his name, as the only ground of pardon, why did he omit to teach this to his Apostles? Why, instead of this, did he teach, that it “behoved him to suffer, that *repentance* and *remission* of sins should be preached in his name?” These are questions which I am not able to answer, and which I would kindly suggest for the consideration of others.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Supposed Evils of Pardon without Substituted Suffering.

WRITERS in favor of the common theory of the atonement have spoken very freely, on what they imagine must

have been the dreadful consequences of a general offer of pardon, on condition of repentance, without a vicarious sacrifice. Dr. Murdock seems to think, that no "absolute pardons" would occur under human governments, were it not that they are "weak," and "imperfect;" and that such pardons "tend so much to weaken the force of law, and to encourage transgression, that every wise law-giver endeavors to render them as rare as possible." As a contrast to this, he informs us, that "God's government is perfect." "He therefore never grants absolute pardons." By "absolute pardons," we are here to understand, pardons without vicarious punishment.

In a Sermon, entitled "The Gospel according to Paul," Dr. Beecher has expressed his views in the following language:—

"But to hold out to all subjects the certainty of pardon for all transgressions, upon the simple condition of repentance, must be, in its effects, an entire abolition of the penalty, and an utter prostration of government by law."

"It is not a subject of momentary doubt, that pardon upon the simple condition of repentance, would break the power of every human government on earth." He also asks:—

"And does God govern the universe upon principles which would fill the earth with anarchy, and turn it into a hell?" p. 7.

By the word "*repentance*," when used to express the condition of pardon, I understand a real change of disposition and conduct, a turning from sin to the path of obedience,—a cordial and practical *reformation*. Of course, it is impossible for me to conceive how a government could be endangered by granting pardon on condi-

tion of *repentance*, any more than by having its enemies converted into friends. Even should *all* the transgressors avail themselves of the offer of pardon, and avoid the penalty by repentance, I should suppose the government would be rather strengthened than weakened by its policy.

That the pardons granted by human governments are sometimes the effect of weakness or imperfection, is not to be doubted. But I am far from thinking that pardons would be more "rare," if governments were more perfect. Indeed, it is my opinion, that under every perfect government, the penitent will always be pardoned. Human rulers, however, are but men, liable to be deceived by false professions of repentance. Hence they have occasion to be on their guard, lest, by intended clemency, they endanger the public welfare. Besides, at the present day, men have but an imperfect knowledge of the principles of overcoming evil with good; and enlightened rulers are sometimes overruled by an ill-informed public opinion. But when public opinion shall be more enlightened, and the spirit of Christian philanthropy shall more abound, greater care will be taken to reform the vicious, and to pardon the penitent. Then the policy of human governments will more resemble that of the government of God.

On the part of God, there can be no danger of being deceived by false professions; nor of granting pardon, without sufficient reasons. That some writers have been under a mistake in supposing that pardon, on condition of repentance, would endanger divine government, may, perhaps, appear from the following facts and circumstances.

1. Prior to the coming of Christ, an experiment was made of this policy, during a period of about four thousand years ; and I believe it is not *known* that any injury resulted to the government of God.

Some may suppose, that during a considerable part of the four thousand years, the Messiah's death was pre-notified by symbolic atonements. This may be true ; but what evidence have we, that the Israelites at any period had any expectation that the Messiah would suffer as their substitute ? I see not the least evidence that they ever had any such expectation, either to deter them from sin, or to excite them to obedience. Yet offers of pardon were made to them on conditions of repentance, and their symbolic worship was designed to excite in them the repentance which was required, and also as means for expressing their penitent and obedient feelings, just as the forms of Christian worship are means for effecting reconciliation, and for expressing our love and gratitude to God.

2. Both John the Baptist and the Messiah preached repentance for the remission of sins, without saying a syllable about a vicarious punishment. Still the government of God remained unshaken.

3. After the resurrection of our Lord, he commissioned his Apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ; to preach, not vicarious punishment, but *repentance* and *remission of sins* in his name. They accordingly preached that men should "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." This they did without the least intimation that the offer of pardon was made on the ground of a substituted punishment ; at least, no such intimation is to be found in any of their sermons which have come down to

us. We may now attend to Dr. Beecher's statement respecting the conditions of pardon, *since* the sacrifice of the Messiah :—

“And what condescension is manifested in the condition of pardon! The lowest possible degree of true holiness, the smallest real preference for God above the world, the lowest degree of sorrow for sin, or faith in Christ, arising from love, are the commencement of a moral excellence, which by promised grace shall be sustained, augmented, consummated, and endure for ever.”
p. 18.

I may ask, did any writer or preacher ever mean any thing *lower* or *less* than what is here represented, by an offer of pardon on condition of repentance? I shall not stop to inquire where Dr. Beecher found his warrant for representing “the lowest possible degree” of right affection, as “the condition of pardon,” nor whether he was prudent in making such a representation, leaving it unexplained and unguarded. But I may pretty safely infer, that in his view, *since* the crucifixion, pardon has been offered on condition of the “lowest possible degree” of repentance. The question then occurs,—Could it be wise in God, to inflict on his Son the “punishment due to us all,” that he might “hold out to all subjects the certainty of pardon for all transgressions, upon the simple condition of repentance,” which “must be, in its effects, an entire abolition of the penalty, and an utter prostration of government by law?” *Why* is there not as much danger in making such an offer *now*, as there would have been, had the Messiah never appeared on earth? So far as the atonement has been regarded as an expression of love, and has had its intended effect in reconciling sinners unto

God, its influence has been salutary and saving. But who believes, or can believe, that wicked men are restrained from more daring rebellion, by having been told that Christ suffered as their substitute? And who that reflects, does not believe, that millions of our race have been encouraged to go on more fearlessly in sin, by the doctrine that Christ suffered the punishment due to their offences? Yet notwithstanding this abuse of the atoning sacrifice, the gospel offer of pardon, on condition of repentance, has been made for about eighteen hundred years, and the government of God has not been prostrated.

The *ease* with which the penalty of the law might be avoided, is urged by Dr. Beecher as ground of objection against the hypothesis of pardon, on condition of repentance. In reference to this strange reasoning, I may ask,—

1. What was the purpose of God in offering pardon on any conditions whatever? Was it not that sinners might be induced to avoid the penalty of the law, by complying with the conditions?
2. Was the Messiah sent to make it more difficult for men to avoid the penalty of the law by repentance? Was such the purpose of his death? Did he not come and suffer for a directly opposite purpose, even to make the way of escape more plain and easy?
3. If the *ease* with which the penalty might be avoided was ever a reason for not offering pardon on condition of repentance; was not this danger greatly increased by what Christ did and suffered for us? Yet, notwithstanding the greater light and advantages which men now have to avoid the penalty of the law, God, it seems, has not been afraid to offer pardon on condition of repentance. Indeed, it appears, from the conduct of God in this affair, that it has

been his wish to make it *easy* for transgressors to avoid the penalty of the law by repentance; and that it never occurred to him that by so doing, he adopted a policy which "must be, in its effects, an entire abolition of the penalty, and an utter prostration of government by law?"

I would now request the reader's attention to the following contrasts between the language of the Bible, and the language of Dr. Beecher:—

God says,—“The soul that sinneth *it shall die*,—the wickedness of the wicked *shall be upon him*. But *if the wicked turn from all his sins* that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he *shall surely live, he shall not die*.” Ezek. xviii. 20, 21.

Dr. Beecher says,—“Let the criminal code go out with the threat,—‘The murderer shall *surely be put to death*; provided, nevertheless, that *if he shall repent, he shall not die*, and no evil shall betide him.’ Would not such legislation be the consummation of folly and mischief?” p. 7.

Our Savior said,—“He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not *shall be damned*.”

Dr. Beecher says,—“Threatenings which carry with them the certainty of easy evasion, contain no restraint, exert no moral power, and are as if they were not.” p. 8.

It is thus that the Doctor has reasoned against “pardon upon the simple condition of repentance.” It is this condition which he represents as so “easy” to be complied with, that pardon on such a condition would “be in its effects, an entire abolition of the penalty” of the law, render “threatenings—no restraint,” and “as if they were not.”

But is not the policy of which Dr. Beecher has said so many harsh things, one of the most prominent features in the revelation of divine mercy to mankind? Is it not the principal thing on account of which the heavenly message by Jesus Christ is called the *gospel*, the *good tidings*? The preaching of our Lord presents to our view the requirements and prohibitions of God, accompanied by "threatenings" of evil to the disobedient, and the most gracious promises of pardon on condition of repentance. How then are we to account for the fact, that Dr. Beecher has represented such "legislation," such connecting offers of pardon to the penitent, with threatening of evil to transgressors, as "the consummation of folly and mischief," and as a policy which, if adopted by human governments, would "fill the world with anarchy, and turn it into a hell?" If I am not under a great mistake, Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, are all involved in the censures implied in Dr. Beecher's remarks; yet I cannot suppose that he was aware of such a sweeping implication.

I do not object to the practice of referring to things pertaining to human governments, to illustrate supposed principles of the government of God. But it would be gratifying to me, if the writers in favor of substituted suffering would do more than to assert what they imagine must be the consequences of pardon on condition of repentance. As there are two principles of pardon which are the subject of controversy, why should not the writers institute a fair comparison of the two principles, by supposing them *both* to be adopted in human governments, the principle of substituted punishment in one state, and pardon, on condition of repentance, in another. If they

could clearly show that greater advantages would result from punishing a few of the *best men* in a state, as substitutes for many convicts, and pardoning on that ground, than could possibly be derived from pardoning on condition of repentance, without vicarious sacrifice, they would naturally enlist the understandings and the feelings of their readers in their favor. Why has not this mode of illustration been adopted? Is it not a fact, that there is no writer in the country who would dare to recommend the policy of substituted suffering, as a means of improving human government? But if we have the example of God in favor of this policy, why should not *Christian* rulers imitate the example? As I am confident no minister can be found, who would risk his reputation, by recommending to our rulers the adoption of such a policy, may I not query, whether more prudence is not desirable in speaking of the principle of pardon on condition of repentance, lest some should be found chargeable with having reproached the only principle on which their own sins can be forgiven?

On a review, I find, that I have omitted one of the supposed cases of "legislation," referred to by Dr. Beecher, when he asked,—“Would not such legislation be the consummation of folly and mischief?” The case omitted is stated in the following words:—“Let the parent say to his high-minded son, allured by temptation, and driven by passion; ‘If you transgress, you shall be disinherited; nevertheless, I am your father, and you are able to repent, and doubtless will repent; and if you do, you shall be forgiven.’” p. 7.

If I understand the purpose of this extraordinary language, it was to deride the idea of pardon on condition of

repentance, considered as a principle of parental government. I have, however, the happiness of believing, that the father of the penitent prodigal, in our Savior's parable, is not the only parent who has acted on the principle in question. Indeed, I hope it is a very common thing for Christian parents to act on this principle, when they have the pleasure of perceiving evidence of true contrition in a child that has transgressed. If a parent is not disposed to forgive his own children when they evince a contrite heart, how can he hope for the forgiveness of God? or how can he pray,—“Father,—forgive us, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us?” Though thousands of pious parents may have imitated the father of the penitent prodigal, yet it may be presumed that not one of them ever addressed “a high-minded son” in such a ridiculous form of words as Dr. Beecher has put into the mouth of a parent. Alas! has it indeed come to this, that a Christian minister can publicly treat with sarcastic ridicule the heavenly principle of parental forgiveness, which was sanctioned and illustrated by the Savior of the world, in one of the most impressive parables that was ever dictated by the wisdom of God!

I would here make an affectionate appeal to pious parents of every denomination of Christians, and in particular to all ministers of the gospel who are parents, and ask,—Do you not, in the government of your children, act on the principle of pardon, on condition of repentance? Whenever you perceive evidence that a disobedient son has “come to himself,” and that his heart is filled with contrition for his offences, do you not take pleasure in imitating the father of the penitent prodigal, by manifesting to your child your forgiving love? Notwithstanding all that

Dr. Beecher has said against this principle, would it be *possible* for him to answer these questions in the negative? But it must be left for him to explain by what means or motives he was induced to treat with contumely the only principle of parental forgiveness, which is so much as intimated in the gospel. I doubt whether it is in the power of human language to inculcate a principle of parental government more clearly or impressively, than our Lord inculcated the duty of forgiveness, on condition of repentance.

Suppose that after Dr. Beecher had prepared his sermon, he had seriously indulged the following train of reflections:—‘I have been writing with remarkable asperity against the principle of “pardon on the simple condition of repentance.” I have endeavored to impress the idea, that this principle, if adopted in civil government or parental government, would be “the consummation of folly and mischief.” But ought I not to be able to show, that the principle of vicarious punishment would be better in each of these cases, than the principle which I have exploded? How then would it do to punish the *best child* in a family, as a substitute for guilty brothers and sisters? Would it be possible for any one to discern the least benefit that could result from the sufferings of the innocent son, or from pretending to pardon the penitent on the ground of their brother’s sufferings? Could such a policy excite the least respect for the father, or his precepts? Could it deter from vice, or excite contrition? Would not all the children of four years of age and upwards be shocked at the thought that their innocent brother had been punished for their offences?’

Had the Doctor seasonably devoted twenty minutes to such self-interrogations, would it have been possible for

him to publish the Discourse in its present form? I think it would not.

While writing some of the preceding paragraphs, a train of thoughts occurred to my mind, which may possibly be as affecting to others as they have been to myself. History informs us that in the dark ages the papal clergy adopted the policy of selling indulgences for sin; and that some purchased indulgences for sins before they had been committed. The payment of money for an indulgence was doubtless regarded as in some sense a substitute for punishment. Whence did this policy originate? It was probably suggested by the doctrine of substituted punishment, as then understood by the Catholics.

“It was,” says Dr. Murdock, “the common opinion, from the end of the second century down to the Reformation, that on a person’s embracing and professing the Christian religion by baptism, all his past sins were cancelled; and that for the sins he might afterwards commit, he must suffer *penance*, give *alms*, *fast*, and *pray*, unless he could atone for them all by martyrdom.” *Discourse, Appendix A.*

Perhaps paying money for an indulgence was regarded not only as a substitute for punishment, but for “penance,” “alms,” and for *fasting* and *prayer*, and, on the whole, the cheapest mode of obtaining salvation. But what must have been the effect of such substitutes for punishment in reference to future offences? Could they be otherwise than pernicious? To me there is something shocking in the idea of *paying* or *receiving* substitutes for the punishment of sins before they were committed. But does not the common theory of the atonement impute to God this policy? It surely teaches

that Christ *suffered*, and that God both *inflicted* and *accepted* a substitute for punishment in regard to sins past and sins future, even for the sins of a long succession of generations of men then unborn, and many, too, still unborn!

May not a considerate man be allowed to pause, prior to assenting to such a doctrine, and humbly ask,—Is it *possible* with God to set such an *example* before his children?

Even those who believe that the Mosaic atonements were substitutes for punishment, will hardly say that they were substitutes in reference to sins which were subsequent to the sacrifice. The history of military, despotic, and semi-savage governments may furnish many instances in which innocent relatives, subjects, or countrymen, were made to suffer as substitutes for guilty rulers or chieftains. But do the annals of our race furnish a single instance of vicarious suffering, inflicted prior to the existence of the beings, whose offences were supposed to be thus avenged or atoned? Barbarism itself never carried substituted punishment to such an extent. How shocking then to reflect, that to “the only wise God,” this questionable policy has been ascribed!

What would Protestants *not* have said of the Catholic clergy, had they extended their indulgences so far, as to receive of parents substitutes for punishments, which might become due by the sins of unborn children and grandchildren!

Were there no other ground of objection to the hypothesis of substituted punishment, I should think that a pretty strong faith in the doctrine might be shaken by the dreadful thought of God’s inflicting penal evils on his innocent

Son, for the sins of men then unborn, anticipating by hundreds and even thousands of years, the existence of the beings whose offences are supposed to have been thus atoned. Can it be possible that God should have thought of *commending his love to us*, by an act or a policy so completely at variance with the principles of justice and mercy, with which he has otherwise imbued the minds of men?

Should human governments attempt to imitate this part of the supposed wise policy of God, what must be the consequences? Must there not be either a general sentiment of horror and reprobation excited in the minds of people of every land, or a sevenfold increase of depravity and crime?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Conditions of Pardon not Affected by Vicarious Sacrifice.

It is a clear case, that since the death of Christ, pardon has been freely offered to sinners on condition of repentance. This, it is presumed, will not be denied by any denomination of Christians in New England. But many writers suppose that it was the suffering of Christ as our substitute, which rendered it safe and consistent to offer pardon on terms so gracious and condescending; and that on this ground the offer is made, and pardon is granted. The question then occurs,—Does the sacrifice of Christ make any difference as to the ease with which sinners can avoid the penalty of the law by repentance? Or does the

sacrifice operate to deter men from more open insurrection against the government of God ?

As in discussing the subject of atonement, frequent allusions have been made to human governments ; with reference to these, I shall examine the present question. Further reflection has convinced me, that the principle of substituted suffering might be adopted in human governments, without any additional sacrifice of the innocent as substitutes for the guilty. For all real crimes, against a state, are sins against God ; and as it is supposed that Christ suffered the "punishment due to us all," why should not this be deemed a sufficient atonement, in the popular sense of the word, for sins against human government, as well as for sins against the divine government ? Why should it require more vicarious suffering to satisfy men than to satisfy God ? or more of such suffering to secure the *honor* of human laws than the *honor* of divine laws ? What, then, can be more easy, than for human legislators to make the sufferings of Christ the *ground* on which pardon shall be offered to transgressors, on condition of repentance ? Let it be supposed, that two neighboring states have recently revised their constitutions of government, to make provision for the pardon of offenders on condition of reformation.

For this purpose, New Hampshire has adopted the following article :—

'As Jesus Christ bore "the punishment due to us all,"—and as, on this ground, God now offers pardon to all, on condition of repentance ; so, on the same ground, it shall be the duty of the governor and council to pardon offences against the state,—provided, that satisfactory evidence of repentance shall be exhibited by the offenders.'

For the same purpose, Massachusetts has adopted an article of the following form:—

‘As our heavenly Father has shown his love to mankind, by a gracious offer of pardon to all, on condition of repentance, and as he has, by his Son, taught us to forgive one another as he forgives us; it shall be the duty of the governor and council to pardon offences against the state,—provided, that satisfactory evidence of repentance shall be exhibited by the offenders.’

I am under a mistake, if these two articles do not fairly exhibit the difference of opinion which now exists in New England, as to the mode in which God offers pardon, on condition of repentance. On both theories, *repentance* is the *condition of pardon*. But on one of them, the offer of pardon is supposed to be made on the *ground* that Christ bore the punishment due to the sins of men. On the other, the offer is supposed to flow directly from the love of God as its source, and through Jesus Christ as the medium of God’s merciful manifestations to a sinful world.

In view of the policy of the two states, it may be asked,—In what respect are the rights and the honor of government better secured in New Hampshire, than they are in Massachusetts? Is it more easy in Massachusetts than in New Hampshire, for transgressors to avoid the penalty of the law? Are not the two states on equal ground as to liability to the charge of encouraging crime by the clemency of its offers of pardon? Does the circumstance in New Hampshire, that the offer is made on the ground of a supposed vicarious punishment, the greatest that was ever endured, have any tendency to *deter* men from abusing the clemency of the government by

multiplied and more aggravated transgressions? Can either the virtuous or the vicious be deterred from sin, by being told, that all the punishment that will ever be due for their sins was endured by their substitute eighteen hundred years ago? If such information would not deter from crimes against the state, why should it deter from sin against God?

If the doctrine of substituted suffering be true, and of a practical character, it would seem that its advantages must be both seen and felt, should its principle be thus adopted in human governments. I am not acquainted with any practical purpose to which it could be more properly applied, than the one which has been suggested. If the doctrine be of a nature to make men good, or even to deter them from sin, it would in the supposed case, have opportunity to exert its genuine influence and energy, for the honor of just laws, for the support of good government, for the prevention of crime, and for the reformation of morals. But who is able to see a single advantage which either the government or the people of New Hampshire would be likely to derive from such a public and practical recognition of the supposed vicarious sacrifice? In the two states different *reasons* are assigned for the offer of pardon; but the *conditions* in both cases are precisely the same. How, then, can the "*legislation*" in the former case, be the "consummation" of wisdom, and in the latter, "the consummation of folly and mischief?"

The inquiry may be pursued one step further. Let it then be admitted, that the article in each of the supposed constitutions, is expressive of the real views of the clergy in the state which adopted it; and that it was adopted by their influence; would it be prudent or just, on such

ground, for the clergy of either state, to reproach the clergy of the other as having renounced Christianity,—become infidels in respect to the gospel,—unworthy of the name of Christians, and as having adopted a principle which must “fill the earth with anarchy, and turn it into a hell?” Could such reproaches be expressive of the benign, meek, and forbearing spirit of Him who loved us, and suffered for us, leaving us an example that we might follow his steps? Would such a spirit of reproach become his ministers while speaking on the affecting sacrifice which he made, to reconcile sinners unto God and to one another? Could such conduct be reconciled with the requisitions of the “new commandment,” uttered by the Savior to his disciples, but a few hours prior to his crucifixion? “This,” said he, “is my commandment, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you.*” Should the time ever arrive when such reproaches shall be common between the ministers of the two states, will there not be occasion for “great searchings of heart,” and for a serious investigation respecting the cause of such flagrant violations of the law of love? If, on inquiry, it should be found that the evil had resulted from the indulgence of party passions, how solemn will be the admonition to all, to *stand aloof* from that moral pestilence! Or should it be found, that the evil originated from habitually looking up to God as a being so resentful, that he cannot forgive even a penitent child, without inflicting a vicarious punishment, how strong will be the proof, that such views of God are injurious in their moral effects on the mind, cherishing in men unkind and unforbearing feelings one towards another, instead of the meek and quiet spirit, “which is the glory of the

Christian religion," and "in the sight of God of great price."

As a means for preventing a state of things so deplorable, I can think of nothing better than for every minister of the gospel, to "*get by heart*," the Sermon on the Mount, as a declaration of the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins. Without taking into view past events, a little serious reflection might convince intelligent Christians, that men are not very likely to be restrained from abusing and calumniating one another by having been taught, that "the righteousness which is by faith," consists in reliance on a vicarious sacrifice, as the only ground of pardon, and that personal holiness is of no account in the great affair of the sinner's justification. Yet it should doubtless be admitted, that many Christians who entertain these opinions are restrained by *other* principles and motives, which occupy a place in their minds.

Should the several denominations of Christians become duly impressed with a belief, that it was by the preaching of Christ, that God *declared* "his righteousness," the righteousness which he requires, "for the remission of sins;" this would, in my opinion, occasion a more important reformation than has ever yet been witnessed in Christendom. For people would then see and feel, that except their personal righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Truth attainable by Approximation.

AGED ministers of the present day, who have been careful observers of the progress of opinion, must be aware, that the present popular creed in New England excludes, as incorrect, several opinions, which their fathers deemed essential, and embraces others which they deemed heretical. Even in regard to the atonement, the change of views within sixty years has been great. Our ancestors represented the atonement as designed to appease the anger of God, and to reconcile him to sinners, and as made only for an elect number of mankind. It was also their opinion, that the sins of the elect were imputed to Christ, and on this ground they maintained their doctrine of vicarious punishment. As a counterpart to this, they supposed that the righteousness of Christ was so imputed to elect believers, that God could see in them no sin. On such hypotheses, they erected the following doctrine:—

“Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us and received by faith alone.”

If the several hypotheses which have been named were ever true, they are so at this day. But if they are true, and as essential as was supposed by our fathers, who of the present New England clergy can be saved? How few of them now believe any one of the following hypotheses:—that the atonement was designed to appease God’s anger and reconcile him to sinners,—that Christ died for

an elect number only,—that the sins of the elect were so imputed to him, that he was “legally guilty” in the sight of God,—or that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the elect for their wedding garment? In connexion with these propositions, our ancestors maintained the doctrine of substituted punishment. But, if I mistake not, the latter hypothesis is the only one of the five, which has not been discarded.

There is such a family likeness between the opinions which have been rejected, and the one still popular, as seems to give them a claim to be kept together. If it be true that Christ suffered our punishment, why reject the idea of imputed guilt? And if we are justified on the ground of his righteousness, or his suffering as our substitute, why reject the doctrine of imputed righteousness? I think, however, that it is much more likely that the doctrine of vicarious suffering will be discarded, than that the kindred doctrines will be recalled and reinstated. The doctrine of substituted suffering is indeed, at this day, strongly asserted; but it is also asserted, that the sinner can have no claim to pardon but on *condition of repentance*. This view of the subject is pretty clearly asserted by Professor Stuart, in answering the following objection:—

“The motives to strenuous effort in order to a virtuous life are greatly weakened by the doctrine in question.”

“The doctrine in question,” was the doctrine of substituted suffering. In answering the objection, the Professor says,—

“All the difficulty of objectors here arises, from overlooking the whole of this grand point:—Atoning blood, as extensive and gratuitous as the favors are which it proffers,

never proffers one unconditionally. The sinner must be humbled and penitent to be sprinkled with it." *Discourse*, p. 35.

Am I deceived, or is it a fact, that "the whole of this grand point" is in full contradiction to the doctrine, that substituted suffering is the only ground of pardon? By "atoning blood," in this case, the Professor probably meant the *gospel*; and of its "favors," we are told, that it "never proffers one unconditionally." I may, therefore, present some of the conditions on which favors are proffered to the sinner.

"Ask, and ye shall receive,"—"Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven,"—"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,"—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

In each of these passages, we have a duty enjoined, as a condition of the favor promised, or implied. In a similar manner other favors are promised, on condition of performing required duty. Can it then be true, that "substituted suffering," or "the righteousness of Christ," or "the merits of Christ," is the only ground of pardon and acceptance, when duties are enjoined *as indispensable conditions* of obtaining the proffered favors? When a father promises pardon to a prodigal son, on condition of reformation, and the performance of specified duties, can the son's reformation and obedience be of no account in respect to his obtaining forgiveness? As the conditions referred to by Mr. Stuart are such as God proposes to *sinner*s, they show on what terms God is ready to pardon. These conditions, however, imply only a reasonable service, a cordial return to the path of duty. Hence, the *promises* of favor, and the *favors* promised are all of free mercy. But while the

love of God is the *source* of pardon, a compliance with the proposed conditions is the *ground* on which the favor is bestowed.

Is it not then a truth, that “the whole of this grand point” goes to prove, that “justification by faith alone,” implies justification on *condition of repentance*, or obedience to the gospel, including all the *conditional obedience* for which the “objectors” ever contended? For it seems to have been discovered, that the gospel does not proffer its favors “unconditionally,” and that the conditions amount to this:—“The sinner must be humbled and penitent.”

Of what use, then, is the doctrine of substituted suffering? It forms no ground on which the sinner may rationally hope for pardon without repentance; and, on condition of repentance, God was always ready to forgive, as well before as since the crucifixion.

Though the doctrine of imputed righteousness has been generally discarded in New England, yet the popular belief still is, that believers are justified only on account of the righteousness of Christ. The Creed of the Theological Institution at Andover contains two propositions, arranged as follows:—

“That repentance, faith, and holiness, are the personal requisites in the gospel scheme:—

“That the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner’s justification.”

When it is said, “repentance, faith, and holiness, are the personal requisites,” the question occurs,—“Personal requisites” for what? The gospel would answer,—“Personal requisites” for pardon. This, too, would seem to accord with the sentiment expressed by Mr. Stuart, re-

specting the conditions on which the gospel proffers its favors. "The sinner must be humbled and penitent." But the next proposition in the Creed seems to give a different account. As the words are commonly used, *pardon* and *justification* mutually imply each other, if they are not the same thing; yet aside from the "personal requisites" for pardon, we are told, "That the righteousness of Christ is the *only ground* of the sinner's justification." Can both propositions be true? Can "repentance, faith, and holiness," be "*requisites*," to justification, if "the righteousness of Christ is the *only ground*" on which the favor is conferred?

When I reflect on former experience, I am led to suspect, that there is now in the minds of many a confusion of ideas relating to the two propositions; and that this confusion has led many to concede that they "know not in what manner the sacrifice of Christ is connected with forgiveness." As education and habit have taught them to say,—“That the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification,” they, of course, overlook or set aside reconciliation or repentance, considered as the connecting link between the sacrifice and pardon, or acceptance with God.

That there is a mistake in supposing "that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification," will perhaps be evident to all who will duly consider how often this idea would need to be expressed or understood in the Bible, to make the sense complete, if this doctrine were true. I shall exhibit a few examples which may stand as the representatives, perhaps, of as many hundreds.

“Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;” for “the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner’s justification.”

“He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted,” for “the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner’s justification.”

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,” for “the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner’s justification.”

“To do good, and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased,” for “the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner’s justification.”

“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” for God “accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ.”

Who can say, that the additional clause in these passages is not necessary to complete the sense, or to prevent mistake, if the doctrine in question is true? And yet, how absurd do the passages appear with such an addition to the inspired text! Will not posterity find it to be a fact, that, in the business of creed-making, more falsehood than truth has been wrought up into supposed essential articles of faith? And will they not account for the fact, on the ground, that party spirit has too commonly been the *fire* in which such articles have been *forged*?

The revelations of divine mercy have been made to men *as sinners*. As sinners they needed a covenant, or method of pardon, on conditions with which it would be possible for them to comply. Such conditions God has gra-

ciously revealed, and has promised the aids of his spirit to those who are willing to turn from the paths of sin, to the path of obedience. A compliance with these conditions, is as properly the ground of pardon to sinners, as perfect obedience is the ground of justification to those who never sinned.

The various forms in which the conditions of favor are expressed, are of similar import, in regard to the temper of heart required. If faith or believing is mentioned as a condition, it is a faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and reforms the life, which is intended; or, as Mr. Baxter says of faith,—“It is Christianity in consent.” The same may be said of other forms in which the conditions are expressed. “The sinner must be humbled and penitent,” may imply all that is required. Where God perceives this temper, he perceives that to which his promise of favor is made; and, in my opinion, God has no occasion to look through a glass of vicarious punishment to be pleased with contrite and obedient affections. Like the holy inhabitants of heaven, he rejoices when one sinner repents. The more clearly we perceive that God is love, the less we shall probably see, or suspect, of a vindictive policy in the atoning sacrifice.

Most cordially can I bid Professor Stuart “God speed,” in all his attempts to show, that the gospel does not proffer its favors “unconditionally,” and that a “humbled and penitent” heart, is the condition of pardon. For I cannot doubt, that more close inquiry on this subject will convince him, that this principle, when properly understood, must undermine and set aside the doctrine of substituted suffering, and prove to the world, that truth is attainable by approximation.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Popular Theory of the Atonement not adapted to promote Peace among Men.

THE views which men habitually entertain of God may be supposed to have an influence on their own characters, analogous to that which a father has in forming the character of his children. It was not without reason that Plato "feared, lest the youth might be corrupted by those fables, which represented the gods as vicious." For it is to be expected, that men will feel at liberty to indulge such feelings and dispositions as they are taught to ascribe to their Maker, or the objects of their worship.

As the language of the New Testament naturally leads us to regard the death of the Messiah, as an event, in which God made a remarkable display of his disposition and feelings towards mankind, the views which we habitually cherish of the nature of that sacrifice, must naturally have much influence in forming our views of the moral character of Jehovah.

That "peace on earth" was one important object of the Savior's mission and sacrifice, will hardly be doubted by any intelligent believer in the Gospel. It is, then, reasonable to suppose, that there was something in that sacrifice, which, rightly viewed, is adapted to promote "peace on earth, and good will among men,"—some manifestation of the feelings of God towards his sinful children, which, if duly cultivated and imitated by them, would give peace to the world. Still, whether the atoning sacrifice will have its intended effect, or be perverted to

opposite purposes, will depend much on the views which Christians entertain of its nature and purposes. That one view of it may be better adapted than another to excite and cherish in men the spirit of forbearance, benignity, forgiveness, and peace, all who duly reflect will admit; and that view of it which has the more of this tendency, is probably the more correct. Firmly believing, that just views of this affecting sacrifice will be found efficacious means for reconciling men to one another, it will be my aim impartially to inquire, What are the views which are adapted to a result so sublime, so animating, and glorious? I shall begin with the more prevalent theory of the atonement.

For a long period of time, it has been supposed, that the sufferings of Christ were a substitute for the punishment due to sinners, and the effects of divine anger. This hypothesis has probably been popular in all the countries of Christendom. But what have been its effects in relation to peace. Has it had the effect to render Christians meek, forbearing, and pacific, like their Lord? Has it subdued the passions of men, and excluded from among Christians violence, persecution, and war? Should any one assert that such have been its effects, would not the history of Christendom, for more than a thousand years, contradict the assertion, in characters of blood? Would not the same history assure us, that neither Pagans, Jews, nor Mahometans, have been more addicted to war than Christians? that their views of the atonement have been so far from restraining them from violence and bloodshed, that in thousands of instances, they have encouraged men to engage in the work of mutual slaughter, in the hope, that the blood of Christ would cancel their murderous deeds? that the

Lord's supper, the affecting memorial of his death, has often been prostituted by the professed ministers of the gospel, to the dreadful purpose of encouraging and preparing officers and soldiers for the work of military murder! and that the symbol of the cross, for the same horrid purpose, has been a common military standard in the wars of Christian nations!

It would doubtless be unjust to impute the wars of Christian nations, wholly to the prevalence of the common hypothesis relating to the atonement; or to insinuate, that all who have possessed such views, have been promoters of war; or to represent that all who have dissented from such views of the sacrifice have been saved from the delusions of war. Too many of the latter class have, doubtless, been carried along by the current of popular opinion; and I am happy in the belief, that not a few of the former have been, in spirit and in practice, the friends of peace. But as it is a clear case, that the atoning sacrifice was designed as a means to reconcile men to one another, as well as unto God, a means for hastening the period when wars shall cease to the ends of the earth; and as it is equally clear, that the popular views of the atonement have long prevailed, and yet have done little, if any thing, to prevent war, or promote peace; it may be both reasonable and important to inquire, whether in fact such views are more adapted to promote forbearance and peace than revenge and war.

The popular doctrine of substituted punishment involves the following suppositions,—that God could not consistently forgive the penitent sinner, on any other ground, than that of inflicting such displays of avenging justice on an innocent substitute, as were equivalent to the evils due to

sinful men ; and that such displays of justice were actually made in the sufferings of his Son.

It may then be asked, what do we perceive in this theory, which is adapted to melt the heart, or to impress the mind with the loveliness of a forbearing and forgiving temper in a sovereign? What do we here see, which has a tendency to excite, or to cherish a benignant spirit in men, towards such as have injured them? If God himself could not forgive, without first making an awful display of avenging justice, why should an earthly sovereign, or any other being? If God might wisely display his wrath against offenders, by inflicting evil on the innocent as their substitute, why may not the rulers of a state adopt the same policy? On the whole, what do we see in the conduct or disposition of God, as represented in this theory, which bears any resemblance to the forbearing and forgiving spirit, which was exemplified by his Son, and which is required by Christ of all his disciples? And is not this view of the atonement more adapted to cherish in men the spirit of resentment and war, than that of forbearance and peace?

The doctrine, that a display of avenging justice was necessary to "vindicate the honor of the law," or "the honor of God," in the pardon of the penitent, bears such a resemblance to the principle of "honor," among warriors and duellists, that I cannot but suspect, that it owes its origin more to the spirit and policy of the world, than to any thing which is contained in the gospel. Besides, there is, what appears to me, a shocking resemblance between the reasonings in favor of the common theory of the atonement, and the reasonings in favor of the war policy. How often do we hear the advocates of war, justify re-

taliatory and vindictive measures, as necessary to vindicate the honor of a government, a state, or an individual, calling them measures of *defence*, to prevent further injuries from the same party, or examples of *redressing wrongs*, to deter others, or as manifestations of a patriotic and heroic spirit, from which all may learn, that injuries will not pass unpunished? How often, too, is it said, that a forbearing spirit under injuries, only invites further aggressions?

Let, then, a candid inquiry be made. Is not the reasoning in favor of the war policy, the same in *principle*, as that in favor of the popular theory of the atonement? How uniformly do the advocates for this theory reason on the hypothesis, that "the honor of the divine law," and "the honor of God," required a display of avenging justice, in order to the pardon of the humbled sinner? that this was also necessary for deterring intelligent beings from transgression, by the assurance it gave, that no sin would pass unpunished! How often too is it said, in this case as well as the other, that if offenders had been pardoned without such a display of justice or anger, men would have been encouraged to sin with the hope of impunity!

If there be a fallacy in supposing that the reasonings in the two cases are of similar import, and on the same general principles, I freely admit, that I have not yet possessed discernment enough to detect it. But if I am correct in supposing that the reasonings are so similar, can it be wonderful, that such views of the atonement have had no influence to render war unpopular in Christendom? Would it not, rather, be wonderful, if they had not had much influence to cherish the vindictive spirit of war, and to render it popular among men?

That the predictions of the ancient prophets respecting the peace of the world under the reign of the Messiah, have not been fulfilled, during the period of eighteen hundred years since he made his appearance on earth, has doubtless been a matter of wonder to millions of Christians, as well as matter of exultation to unbelievers. But probably a great majority of these wondering Christians have themselves been, in one form or another, promoters of war; and if each of them would impartially examine, he might find, in his own bosom, a miniature of the very thing which has obstructed or delayed the fulfilment of the divine predictions. It was not foretold, that wars should cease by the influence of the gospel, while Christians themselves should continue to cherish the principles and the spirit of war; and to expect that wars will cease while such is the policy of Christians, is as unreasonable, as it would be to hope, that *Temperate Societies* will put an end to the practice of intemperance, if even a majority of their own members should be known to be habitual drunkards. It has long been a common thing for Christians to pray, that the predicted reign of peace on earth may commence; but until there shall be a greater consistency between their prayers and their practice, it is in vain to expect that wars will cease. When Christians shall cease to be promoters of war, war will cease to spread its ravages among them; but while they nourish the monster, by praising his exploits, and cherishing his spirit in their own bosoms, they may expect to share in his desolating enterprises.

I may also say, that I have little hope that Christians in general will renounce the principles or the practice of war, so long as it shall remain the popular belief, that God

himself could not forgive his penitent children, but on the ground of having inflicted on his innocent Son such penal evils, as were equivalent to all the miseries which they have deserved. As long as Christians shall believe, that they have the example of God to justify vindictive feelings and measures against such as have injured them, the opposite example of the Son of God will not be likely to have its due influence on their minds. I say *opposite example of the Son of God*, for at the very moment when the Father is supposed to have been pouring out the vials of his wrath on his immaculate Son, as our substitute, this very Son was employing his dying breath in fervent prayer that his murderers might be forgiven! What a contrast! the Father punishing the innocent, and the Son praying for the guilty! The Father inflicting penal evils on an obedient Son, who loved him with all the heart; and the Son praying that favor might be shown to his persecuting foes, who were insulting him while in the agonies of death!

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Atoning Sacrifice a Means for the Pacification of the World.

“HEREIN is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” 1 John iv. 10, 11.

In the preceding chapter, I think it has been shown, that the common theory of the atonement is adapted rather to justify the vindictive principles of war, than to promote peace on earth. A very different theory of the atonement is suggested in the passage of Scripture now before us, and one which it may be hoped will produce more favorable results.

That nothing of the nature of avenging justice or vicarious punishment is intimated in the first of these verses, would probably be obvious to every discerning reader, were it not, that incorrect views of the atoning sacrifice have given a false meaning to words. Those who have been taught from their childhood, that the sufferings of Christ were the effects of God’s anger against him as our substitute, naturally attach the idea of something awful and vindictive to the words *atonement*, *atoning sacrifice*, and *propitiation*, while each of them properly means, a *reconciling sacrifice*, or an affecting display of love on the part of one to reconcile another. Hence the Apostle says, “*Herein is love.*”

But why does the Apostle say “propitiation for our sins?” Does not propitiation for our sins mean punishment for our sins? Surely not, unless punishment is of a conciliating tendency,—unless punishing the innocent is a display of love. The phrase “for our sins,” means on account of our sins,—that is, on account of our being sinners. Hence, Paul says,—“God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were *sinners*, Christ died for us,”—and, “if when we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, &c.”

That it was, indeed, the *love* of God, not his wrath, which was displayed in the propitiation, is further evident, from the fact, that the Apostle urges us to *imitate* this divine example. Having stated how great a display God had made of his love, he immediately adds,—“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” Who can suppose, that by this language, John encouraged Christians to show their love by punishing the innocent, that the guilty might escape? Yet it is very certain, that he regarded the example of God as worthy of their imitation.

“God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;” what *world* was this, that “God so loved?” It was a world of sinners. The same love which was manifested in sending the Son, was manifested in his death. The love of the Son in laying down his life for us, was of the same nature of that of the Father, in sending him; and such is the love which Christians are required to exercise. Hence, the sacrifice must have been made on the principle of love to enemies, to overcome evil with good.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord thus addressed his hearers:—“Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; *that ye may be the children of your Father* who is in heaven. For he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” In this passage, our Savior has distinctly informed us of the nature of God’s love, his feelings towards his enemies, and what love we must possess to be the children of God in a saving

sense. For we are required to love our enemies, *that we may be the children of our Father in heaven.*

Paul once acted with great zeal on the principle of overcoming evil with evil, or hatred to supposed enemies. But after taking a few lessons in the school of Christ, he ceased breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and became zealous in promoting the very cause which before he had attempted to destroy. Deeply impressed with the love which God had displayed to a sinful world, he fervently besought his fellow Christians, "by the mercies of God," to conform to the precepts of Christ. Thus he wrote to the Christians at Rome,—“Bless them that curse you,—Recompense to no man evil for evil,—Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,—If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,—Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

“So artists melt the sullen ore of lead,
By heaping coals of fire upon its head;
In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow,
And, freed from dross, the silver runs below.”

If we take into view the sinful character of mankind, and the conduct of God towards them, how obvious it is, that he acts on the same benevolent principle towards us, that he requires of us towards our fellow men. When his enemies are hungry, he feeds them, when thirsty, he gives them drink, and is constantly bestowing favors on the evil and unthankful. In nothing, perhaps, was Jesus Christ more perfectly the Representative and Image of the invisible God, than in the forbearing and forgiving spirit which he displayed on the cross; while in the agonies of

death, he implored forgiveness for his persecutors. Behold, then, what manner of love the Father bestows on us, that we may become his obedient children! Well might John say,—“If God has so loved us, we ought to love one another;” and how certain it is, that a compliance with this exhortation would banish war from the world!

How exceedingly different, and how much more affecting is an atoning sacrifice made on the principle of overcoming evil with good, than a sacrifice made by a display of avenging justice on the innocent as a substitute for the guilty! Does not the latter theory approach too near imputing to God the policy of overcoming evil with evil? I am far from supposing that such is the intention of those who adopt the hypothesis! but what better would they be able to make of the principle, should they see it adopted in any form of human government? But if we exclude from our views of the atonement every thing vindictive, regarding it as truly a display of love, and of such forbearing, forgiving love on the part of God, as was exemplified by the Son in praying for his enemies; how truly do we *behold a reconciling sacrifice*, in the highest degree adapted to melt the heart, and reconcile the sinner to God.

Is it not obvious, that a due consideration of such a sacrifice, and the principle on which it was made, would heal animosities among men, beat swords into ploughshares, and fill the world with love and peace? Let such views of the sacrifice prevail, and the symbol of the cross will cease to be employed as a military banner. Indeed, the sight, or even the thought of that cross, if duly considered, would be so far from encouraging men to fight, that it would cause the weapons of war to drop instantaneously from their hands. How gross must have been the delusions

which could induce men to fight under a symbol of that cross, on which the Savior died praying for his foes !

How could the duellist write his challenge, or the war-maker his manifesto, if he would first look to the cross, and there behold what manner of love was displayed towards sinners ! What occasion could there ever be for either private or public war, if the party offended or injured, would imitate God's example, to overcome evil with good, by making overtures and even sacrifices to effect the reconciliation of the offender. Shall Christians, then, with the gospel in their hand, indulge vindictive passions, and act on a principle directly the reverse of that on which God has acted for their salvation ? Shall they, in their treatment of each other, set at nought that principle of forbearance and forgiveness, by which their forfeited lives are continued from day to day, and without which it is impossible even with God to save their guilty souls ?

In the atoning sacrifice may yet be found a healing balm for the moral malady which has so long affected and desolated the world, as efficacious as was experienced by the serpent-bitten Israelites when they looked to the symbolic remedy, the brazen serpent raised on high. For what more can be necessary to the abolition of war, than that the minds of men should become imbued with correct views of the love displayed in the gospel sacrifice, and of the principle on which it was offered. In proportion as men shall have their minds thus imbued, war must become abhorred, and ways and means will be devised to avoid it. Hence the universal prevalence of such views must exclude war from the world.

Should the ministers of the gospel, of the various denominations, become properly impressed with the idea, that the atoning sacrifice was indeed a display of love, not of wrath, and that it is the duty of Christians to be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful; with what alacrity will they lay aside their sectarian hostilities,—flock to the Christian standard of peace, and unite with peace societies to effect a pacific revolution throughout the world. Then we may hope to see Christian churches, what they always should have been, Peace Societies, diffusing a heavenly influence in every direction. The union of ministers and churches of different sects for such a purpose, would make them better acquainted with each other, and ashamed of their past bitterness and alienation.

When correct views of the atoning sacrifice shall prevail, the new commandment of Christ to his disciples, “that ye love one another as I have loved you,” will be better understood; and it will find a place, and have a governing influence in the minds of Christians. They will cease to imagine that the spirit of war and persecution is consistent with the requirements of the gospel, or the truths taught on the cross. It is to be expected, that ministers of the gospel will lead the way in this work of reforming the world. When their minds shall have been melted into contrition and love one to another, in view of the gospel sacrifice and the new commandment, the influence of these sentiments will ascend even to the highest seats of authority; and, like the oil poured on the head of Aaron, it will descend to the skirts or lowest ranks in society. It will have a saving effect in the education of the young, and cause children to be so trained up in the way they should go, that when they are old they will not de-

part from it. Then millions of every land may have occasion to unite in the transporting language,—“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” and, Behold the Lamb of God who has taken away the *wars* of the world!

CONCLUSION.

It has been my aim in the preceding chapters fairly to exhibit and explain such passages of Scripture, as have been most relied on as teaching the doctrine of vicarious punishment; and, on a review of what I have written, I do not find that I have failed in that particular. Sure I am, that no text has been omitted from an unwillingness to meet the most weighty arguments in favor of that view of the atoning sacrifice; and equally sure I am, that no text has been designedly perverted to favor my own hypothesis.

In the present state of public feeling, some may probably deem it both arrogant and presumptuous in me, to dissent from what has been for ages so generally believed to be true. I have reflected much on this circumstance, and have endeavored to weigh it in an even balance. To dissent from public opinion on a subject of such importance is not a light thing; and I am not, and ought not to be, indifferent in regard to my own reputation. The general opinion of others has been regarded by me, as one of many powerful reasons, why I should examine the subject with great care, and not be hasty in my decisions;

but not a reason why I should continue to acquiesce in the popular belief, contrary to the convictions of my own mind, nor a reason for suppressing what I believe to be true. For I have also reflected on the facts, that there was a time when all our ancestors were Pagans ; at a later period, they were all Papists ; and had there been no men to hazard their reputation by publishing unpopular opinions, we should now have been all Papists or Pagans. There was a time when the doctrine of transubstantiation had been so long the general belief of Christians, that it was at imminent peril that any one called in question its correctness. But after a long night of darkness on this subject, God raised up one and another to examine, and to express their views of dissent. Others embraced their views, and now all the Protestants of Christendom reject as absurd, what their forefathers regarded as an essential doctrine, although the majority is still against them. Have I not, then, the example of all who have been worthy of the name of Reformers, and even the example of the many millions of Protestants, to justify me in attempting to correct what I believe to be erroneous views of an important doctrine ?

Besides, I have reflected on what has been the state of things in Christendom, since the age of Constantine ; how constantly inquisitive men have had to pursue their inquiries, at the hazard of reputation, if not of life. Such having been the perils attending free inquiry, it cannot be very wonderful, should it be found a fact, that some gross errors of long standing have failed of being detected. However, if after much examination, the gospel had even *seemed* to me to teach the common theory of the atonement, I should, probably, have been silent on this subject.

But as I could find no satisfactory evidence in favor of the popular views, I have felt at liberty to speak of them as I do of other opinions which appear to me erroneous. But firmly believing that good men may be in great errors, and not doubting that I may yet be in errors which others will correct, it has been my aim to avoid every thing censorious or reproachful in regard to the moral characters of men from whose opinions I dissent. If on this point I have failed, I shall surely need the forgiveness of God; for it must have been very offensive to him, if in writing on the atoning sacrifice as a display of his love, I have violated the principle on which I believe that sacrifice to have been made.

If it be a truth, as I have attempted to show, that the prevalent views of the atonement have no tendency to render the principles of war abhorred, or to excite and cherish in men a forbearing and forgiving spirit; this is, surely, strong ground for suspecting that these views are not accordant with the gospel. For of all the peculiarities of the Christian religion, there is no one by which it is more distinguished, than that of its benign, forgiving, and pacific character. Its founder was "the Prince of peace," who was sent by "the God of peace," with a heavenly message called "the gospel of peace;" and one of the objects of the Messiah in laying down his life was to "make peace through the blood of the cross." How incongruous then with these facts, is the hypothesis, that this reconciling sacrifice was made by a vindictive display of God's justice on his innocent Son as our substitute!

With such views of the vindictive nature and purposes of the atonement, Christians have not only been warriors, but persecutors of one another, and this to an extent.

which perhaps was never surpassed by Pagans, Jews, or Mahometans. This certainly is a most disgraceful trait in the character of a people who profess the religion of love and peace. The same spirit which the unbelieving Jews indulged, in crucifying the Lord of glory, has been a thousand times indulged by his professed followers in persecuting one another. Such flagrant apostacy from the spirit of our religion must have had a cause, perhaps many causes, among which may probably have been false and popular views of some doctrines, particularly that of the atonement. I may here ask, would such views of the atoning sacrifice as I have endeavored to support, ever dispose men to persecute one another? If at any time they should feel a vindictive spirit rising in their bosoms, would not a recollection of the forgiving love displayed on the cross allay this passion, and melt their hearts into tenderness? Viewing the sacrifice as a display of forbearing, forgiving love towards enemies, what Christian could raise his voice, lift his hand, or move his pen, to injure a dissenting brother?

But, on the other hand, if we habitually contemplate the sufferings of Christ as the effects of God's anger,—as a proof that God could not forgive the penitent but on such ground, can it be wonderful if such contemplations cherish in us correspondent feelings towards our fellow sinners? Can it be surprising, if such views have had influence to encourage sectarian as well as political hostilities? and may not such views have done much to produce such a state of feeling, that “even to discuss the subject of atonement is at present putting to hazard a man's good name, if not his standing in the church!” If the writer in the *Christian Spectator* was correct in sup-

posing such to be the state of feeling among us, is not this fact a proof, that very incorrect views of the atonement are generally entertained? The fig-tree will as soon bear olive-berries, as such feelings will result from correct views of the atoning sacrifice.

It will not, I think, be denied by any intelligent Christian, who has candor enough to reflect impartially, that the view I have given of the sacrifice, is far more adapted than the popular one, to bring war and persecution into disrepute. This circumstance cannot be of small value in the comparative estimate of the two theories. But, if I mistake not, there are other advantages on the same side, while there is nothing on the other to balance against them.

1. Regarding the atoning sacrifice as a display of God's love to sinners, has no tendency to impress the idea that the Father was less compassionate and more vindictive in his feelings towards sinners, than the Son; but that the common theory has this tendency will, I believe, not be denied or doubted by any conscientious Christian, who was educated under its influence. I well recollect the impressions made on my own mind when a child; nor can I doubt that similar impressions have been made on the minds of millions of others. Can it be otherwise than injurious to impress the minds of the young with this dreadful idea, that such was the character of God, such his anger towards us, that no sinner could ever have been saved, had it not been for the wonderful compassion of the Son, who interposed in our behalf, consenting to suffer the full displays of avenging justice, that God's anger might be turned away from us, and pardon granted to the penitent? When a child is thus taught, is it *possible* for him

to entertain so high an opinion of the Father as of the Son? And can a theory be true, which tends so much to sink the moral character of Jehovah in the view of his intelligent offspring? Much that has been written on the subject of the atonement seems to me of this tendency, though not so designed by the writers.

2. If I am not deceived, the theory of the atonement which I have supposed to be true, contains no idea which seems to contradict the acknowledged principles of justice and benevolence. But can this be said of the prevalent theory? Our ideas of justice and benevolence are chiefly derived from the Bible; and Christians of all denominations, and many Deists, freely admit, that the moral sentiments inculcated by the gospel are of the purest kind. But from my own experience I am led to suppose, that the advocates of vicarious punishment must at times be shocked with the idea, that according to the common sense of enlightened men, it is a perversion of justice to punish the innocent that the guilty may escape; and yet, that this is the principle on which it is generally supposed that Christ suffered for us. I freely admit, that we should not hastily reject a doctrine because it involves some idea which is to us perplexing; but when a theory seems flagrantly to contradict one of the first principles of moral justice, we *may* and we *ought* impartially to inquire, whether in fact that doctrine, or that view of a doctrine, is authorized by the gospel.

3. It seems to be desirable, that we should have some satisfactory ideas respecting the way in which the atoning sacrifice has its saving influence. Yet some of the most eminent advocates for vicarious punishment, or substituted sufferings, have freely acknowledged, that they did not un-

derstand how the atonement has its influence on salvation, or how it is connected with forgiveness. On the theory proposed in the preceding pages, I have endeavored to show, not only that the sacrifice is connected with forgiveness, but what is the connecting link, and how the connexion is formed. What I have written on that point, may not prove satisfactory to others ; but no part of the inquiry has resulted in more satisfaction to my own mind.

When a conscientious writer is about to publish such views of an important doctrine as are very different from those which have been generally entertained, he cannot be indifferent in regard to their moral tendency. He will seriously consider what influence they must naturally have, should they be cordially adopted. This inquiry I have endeavored to make in regard to the views I have given of the atoning sacrifice. Nor have I been unmindful of the fact, that this may probably be my last publication ; and that very possibly I may be summoned to my final account, before the contents of these pages shall appear in print. On the most solemn and impartial inquiry, I can say with truth, that I have found both consolation and encouragement from the belief, that no danger can possibly result to any soul from a cordial and practical adoption of the views I have given of the great sacrifice. God may have had purposes to answer by that event, which I have not discovered. If it be so, I think the undiscovered purposes cannot be so different from those which have been stated, as to change the character of the sacrifice. As to danger, it is my firm belief, that there can be no more danger in embracing the views which have been urged, than in obedience to the following precepts :—" Love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your Father who

is in heaven." "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." For in my view these precepts perfectly accord with the spirit of every moral truth which was expressed in the sacrifice. The more therefore we imbibe this spirit, the more we shall bear the moral image both of the Father and the Son. On such views of the sacrifice, we may meditate by day and by night, and from year to year, without the least danger of finding any thing in them to exite or to cherish a resentful spirit, or a disposition to avenge a wrong prior to forgiving it. On the contrary, the more we reflect on the forgiving love displayed on that occasion, the more likely we shall be to feel the importance of possessing the spirit of Christ. If we possess this forgiving love, we are assured that God will forgive us. Hence, we shall have nothing to fear from his avenging justice, but much to hope from the ocean of his mercy. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things." And who or what can ever separate us from love like this, if in obedience to its dictates we become reconciled unto God! On this ground, I may adopt the language of Paul:—"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Illustration from Historical Facts.

EDWARD III., invader of France, besieged Calais nearly a year, and reduced the inhabitants to a state of starvation and despair. Seeing no other way of relief, they proposed to capitulate,—probably hoping for honorable terms. The king, however, would grant them only “personal safety,” and not even this, except on the condition, that they should deliver up to him six of their principal men to be executed. This barbarous proposition subjected the people to deep distress; for they were famishing for the want of bread, and yet they could not endure the thought of obtaining relief, by delivering up to certain death, six respected friends, who had shared with them the hardships and dangers of the siege. While they were in this perplexed situation, Eustace St. Pierre magnanimously stepped forward and offered himself as one of the victims for the vicarious sacrifice. Animated by his example, five others soon offered themselves to complete the required number. To them were committed the keys of the city; barefooted, and with ropes about their necks, they went forth and delivered the keys to the conqueror. But so far was he from being melted by this patriotic act, that he ordered the heroes to be “immediately led to execution.”

The king's son, the Prince of Wales, and the English nobles who were present, entreated the king not to sacrifice men who had thus offered their own lives for the salvation of others. But he was deaf to their entreaties. Philippa, the queen, who was on the ground, being informed of the circumstances, came forward, and addressing the king, “implored him, for Christ's sake, to desist from an act which would be an eternal blemish on his

memory." Her prayer was successful. She then caused the men to be kindly treated, and dismissed with presents.
Bigland.

The impressions which these facts naturally make on the mind respecting the character of the several persons concerned, may help us to discern what influence the doctrine of vicarious punishment is adapted to produce. To what disadvantage does the British monarch appear in this narrative, compared with St. Pierre, with the queen, with the Prince of Wales, or with the English nobles ! We may leave out of the account all considerations of the injustice of Edward in making war on France,—we may even admit that the inhabitants of Calais were very blameable, and that their distress was the fruit of their own wickedness ; yet the king appears a vindictive barbarian, compared with St. Pierre or Philippa.

Perhaps the king persuaded himself, that his *honor*, or the good of his empire, required a display of avenging justice, as a ground on which he might show favor to the distressed inhabitants of Calais. If this were the fact, he must have been deluded by vindictive passions ; and the best we can make of his conduct is, that he wished to overcome evil with evil.

Ought we not, then, to be careful that we do not impute to God, a disposition which we cannot but regard as odious in an earthly sovereign ? If it evinced an odious temper in Edward to require a vicarious sacrifice, as a condition of showing favor to a distressed people, when supplicating for mercy ; do we not ascribe to God a similar disposition, if we say, that a vicarious punishment was necessary to his pardoning his *penitent children* ? And does not the doctrine of substituted punishment under the divine government, represent God as even more vindictive than Edward III. ? If any of the people of Calais had deserved death at the hands of Edward, it was probably so with St. Pierre and his five companions. But it is admitted, that Jesus Christ was not only innocent, but perfectly righteous. Besides, Edward was not so utterly inexorable, but that he listened to the prayer of his wife, and relinquished his cruel purpose of making the in-

tended sacrifice ; but it is supposed, that God actually inflicted on his Son a vicarious punishment, equivalent to the deserts of all mankind !

As Edward appears to great disadvantage compared with St. Pierre, if the doctrine of vicarious punishment be true, does not God appear to great disadvantage compared with his Son ? If Philippa was correct in supposing that it would be an “ eternal blemish on the memory ” of her royal husband, should he persist in his purpose of sacrificing the six voluntary victims ; shall we not cease to teach a doctrine which seems to imply as great a “ blemish ” in the character of God ?

Far be it from my heart to insinuate that the advocates for vicarious punishment *mean* to reproach their Maker. They doubtless imagine, that the doctrine reflects great honor on him ; but it seems to me, that serious and impartial reflection will convince them, that there must be danger in ascribing to God a principle of government, which, if generally adopted among men, would fill the world with horror, and destroy all confidence in those who bear rule. How much more to the honor of Edward would it have been, had the narrative ended thus :— On seeing the six victims approach in such a forlorn condition, he, like the father of the prodigal son, was moved with compassion, went forth to meet them, stripped them of all their badges of ignominy, arrayed them in robes of honor, and in all respects treated them with the strongest marks of kindness, approbation, and esteem !—Such a conquest over his own vindictive passions, would have been far more to the honor of Edward III. than all his military exploits.

No. II.

Thoughts on the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

EXCEPTING the form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, perhaps there is no portion of the New Testament which has had a more extensive, or a more favorable influence on the minds of men, than the parable of the prodigal son. The moral sentiments expressed in it are of the most interesting nature; and they are communicated in a manner which naturally attracts attention, and commends them to the consciences and the hearts of men. Whatever other points of instruction some may have supposed to be contained in the parable, I think the general impression has been, that our Lord meant to describe the feelings of a true penitent, and the forgiving love of God—the readiness with which he pardons and restores such as, with contrite hearts, turn from the ways of sin and supplicate his favor. In both cases, the feelings described are interesting to all our race.

The parable would be both interesting and instructive, were it to be viewed only as a simple narrative of facts, which occurred in the family of a benevolent earthly parent. In this glass, disobedient children may see the ruinous tendency of vicious courses, and with what feelings it becomes them to abandon the paths of disobedience and vice, and to return to their parents. Parents, too, are instructed as to the feelings which they should exercise toward penitent children; how ready they should ever be to manifest forgiving love, as soon as they can discover proper signs of genuine repentance.

But when this touching narrative is understood as having been uttered by the Savior of men, for the purpose of teaching sinners what feelings of heart are required of them as conditions of divine forgiveness, and with what compassion and readiness God pardons and restores the penitent; the parable then acquires an interest which nothing can surpass, and the highest claims to the attention of all classes of people.

It is remarkable how perfectly this parable precludes every idea of the necessity of vicarious suffering, in order to the pardon of the penitent sinner. Had it been the special purpose of our Lord to provide an antidote for such a doctrine, it is difficult to conceive what could have been devised better adapted to that end ; and I verily believe that this parable has done more to counteract the natural effects of the doctrine of vicarious punishment, than any other portion of Scripture.

Suppose an attempt should be made to improve the parable, and to accommodate it to the popular theory of atonement and forgiveness, by interpolating or adding such clauses as the following :—‘ Prior to the return of the son, the father had taken care to secure the honor of his law, by inflicting the penalty due to the prodigal on an innocent substitute ; and on this ground only, the pardon was granted.’ Who can deny, that such an addition would mar the beauty of the parable, and change the character which which our Lord gave to the forgiving father ? But would such marring effects result from the supposed addition, if the doctrine of substituted punishment were the glory of the gospel ? I may further ask,—Does not the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice mar the gospel, as much as the supposed addition would mar the parable ? Such, it appears to me, is the lamentable fact.

There is still another light in which the parable may be viewed, not less interesting, perhaps, than any in which it has ever been placed. In the chapter on “ the Propitiatory, and the Righteousness of God,” I endeavored to prove that Jesus Christ was “ set forth,” as the gospel mercy-seat, “ to declare ” the righteousness which God requires for the remission of sins ; and that this was done by his preaching and example. I mentioned the Sermon on the Mount, as emphatically a declaration of the righteousness which God requires. — In the same light, I regard the parable under review ; or perhaps I might more properly say, that this is a practical illustration of the righteousness which God requires under different circumstances. The penitence, or contrition, illustrated in the returning prodigal, is but the commencement of the righteousness re-

quired by God. He also requires of us the forgiving temper illustrated in the conduct of the father. If we forgive men their trespasses, God will forgive ours. Are we parents, and have we penitent children, who implore our forgiveness? Then the example of the Father in the parable is for our imitation. So in respect to any one who may have wronged us; if he returns, saying,—“I repent,” we have still an example for our imitation, in the father of the prodigal son. The circumstance, that this father represents our heavenly Father, is no objection to the view of the parable which has now been given. For we are required to be “followers of God as dear children,” and even to love and to do good to enemies, that we may be the spiritual children of so kind a Father.

Have we not then in this parable, a striking miniature painting of the great truths of the gospel of reconciliation? The representations are so vivid, that we seem to be spectators of a happy meeting of the parties which had been at variance. The sinner, ruined by his vices, comes to himself, and with a contrite heart sets out on his return to his Father. But while yet a great way off, he is discovered by the father, who is moved with compassion, and immediately goes forth to meet him,—not to reproach him for his past profligacy and ingratitude,—not to present obstacles to a reconciliation, but to testify his forgiving love, and his joy on beholding in his Son the proofs of a penitent mind. How could human language have portrayed in a more clear and impressive manner, the forgiving love of God, or the temper of heart which insures the pardon of sin? And are not these truths, or the traits of character thus illustrated, the sum and essence of the glad tidings of great joy, which the Messiah was sent more clearly to make known to the children of men?—the truths too, which he sealed or ratified by the blood of the cross?

Suppose the people of a certain province to have exposed themselves to the just displeasure of a sovereign who has their lives and their happiness at his disposal. He sends his son to them as an ambassador of peace. Their first inquiry would naturally be,—‘Is the ambassador duly authorized, and one in whose instructions we may place full

confidence?’ This question being answered in the affirmative, two other questions of transcendent importance would then occur:—‘What is the disposition of the sovereign towards us? and what does he require of us as conditions of forgiveness and restoration?’ Now these questions are both answered by the parable in a clear and impressive manner. Does not, then, this parable contain a summary of the good tidings of great joy, in a form adapted to the capacities of the different classes of mankind,—the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the learned and the ignorant? And may I not be justified in saying, that it exhibits the *essentials* of the gospel, in a much more perspicuous and intelligible form, than they have ever been exhibited in any party-creed or confession of faith, since the days of the Apostles?

No. III.

Thoughts on the Righteousness of Faith.

IN the chapter on the phrase “the righteousness of God,” I briefly explained what I believed to be meant by “the righteousness of faith,” or “the righteousness which is by faith.” The more I have reflected on the hypothesis I then advanced, the more important it has appeared to my mind, and the stronger has been my desire that it should be thoroughly examined, and clearly understood. For a mistake on this point must naturally involve injurious consequences; and it may expose many to think, that they are in the path of life, while indeed they are “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

Cordial obedience to the precepts of Jesus Christ, resulting from faith in him as the promised Messiah, the Light, and the Savior of the world, must be a very different kind of righteousness from that which consists in a *re-*

liance on vicarious suffering. It is, indeed, said,—“Unto the pure, all things are pure;” and it may be true, that good people sometimes make erroneous opinions subservient to good purposes,—even the purposes of obedience to God. But it has often been asserted and admitted, that mankind are too generally disposed to devise substitutes for obedience. What, then, must be the natural effect of a supposed essential article of faith, which not only presents a substitute for obedience, but explicitly asserts personal obedience to be of no avail in reference to the pardon of our offences, and our acceptance with God.

Any doctrine which makes the righteousness of faith to consist in something which God does *not* require, instead of something which he *does* require, must surely be pernicious in its tendency. I hope that no minister of the gospel at this day will deny, that Christians are required to obey the moral precepts of Jesus Christ, as taught in the Sermon on the Mount, and in other discourses; and I think it cannot be denied, that such obedience is the genuine fruit of faith in him as “the Christ of God,” the Son whom the Father sent to be the Savior of the world. But where shall we find a *requirement* to believe that God laid on this Son “the punishment due to us all?” or where shall we find a *promise* that those shall be saved who rely on a vicarious punishment for the remission of their sins? I can honestly say, that I have not been able to find either such a requirement, or such a promise in the Bible.

“THE WORD OF FAITH,” which the Apostles preached, was the following:—“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Rom. x. 9. As the resurrection of Christ from the dead, was not only a proof of the resurrection and future life which he taught, but a proof that he was the Messiah, it is easy to see that a cordial belief, that “God raised him from the dead,” was necessary to that obedience to his precepts which he required. But to believe that God raised him from the dead, is a very different thing from believing that he bore our punishment on the cross.

To the words of Paul just quoted, he immediately subjoined,—“For with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness,”—meaning, as I conceive, that the belief which produces righteousness, or true obedience, implies, not a mere assent of the understanding, but the approbation of the heart, real *love* to the truth believed. Hence, it is “with the *heart* that man *believeth unto righteousness*,” or so believes, as to “obey the truth.” But to rely on vicarious suffering for the remission of sin, is not *obedience* to any precept that I have been able to find in the gospel.

Among his definitions of *righteousness*, Mr. Cruden has the following:—“The active and passive obedience of Christ, whereby he perfectly fulfilled the law, and propitiated the justice of God; which obedience being imputed to the elect, and received by faith, their sins are pardoned, their persons accepted, and they brought to eternal glory. This righteousness whereby the sinner is justified, is called the righteousness of God, because it is of God’s institution, and which alone he will accept of to life; or because it was performed by him who is God as well as man, and is therefore of infinite value or merit. It is called the righteousness of faith, because it is apprehended and applied by faith.”

The texts to which he principally refers as proofs of his doctrine, are such as contain the phrase, “the righteousness of God.” The obedience and sufferings of Christ are what he calls, the “righteousness of God;” and this he supposes is also called, “the righteousness of faith,” as it is apprehended and applied by faith. It implies nothing of the nature of *obedience* on the part of the believer. One of the texts to which Mr. Cruden refers, is Rom. x. 3. “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Believing that a mistake as to the meaning of the phrase, “the righteousness of God,” has done much to mislead the minds of men on this most interesting subject, I shall here bring to view the substance of Dr. Campbell’s note on Matt. vi. 33, to which I alluded in the chapter on

“The Righteousness of God.” I quote from Dr. Campbell, regarding him as both a candid and a judicious writer. The intelligent reader will readily perceive that, in the note to be quoted, the Doctor had independence enough to explain the passages referred to, in a very different sense from what had formerly been given to them by the Presbyterian church of which he was a member. When a writer of such talents and learning as Dr. Campbell, ventures, at the hazard of his reputation, so far to depart from what had long been the popular belief of the church to which he belonged, he is surely entitled to a candid hearing. Though I cannot acknowledge myself indebted to him for the hypothesis I have advanced, I freely own, that after forming the opinion, I was gratified in finding that it had been supported by so eminent a writer as Dr. Campbell.

Substance of Dr. Campbell's note on Matt. vi. 33.

“The righteousness of God, in our idiom, can mean only the justice or moral rectitude of the divine nature. But, in the Hebrew idiom, that righteousness which consists in a conformity to the declared will of God, is called *his righteousness*. In this way, the phrase is used by Paul, Rom. iii. 21, 22. x. 3.; where the righteousness of God is opposed by the Apostle, to that of the unconverted Jews; and *their own righteousness*, which he tells us they went about to establish, does not appear to signify their personal righteousness, any more than the righteousness of God, signifies God's personal righteousness. The word *righteousness*, as I conceive, denotes there, what we should call a system of morality, or righteousness, which he denominates their own, because fabricated by themselves, founded partly on the letter of the law, partly on tradition, and consisting mostly in ceremonies, and mere externals. This creature of their own imaginations they had cherished, to the neglect of that purer scheme of morality which was truly of God, which they might have learnt, even formerly, from the law and the Prophets properly understood, but now more explicitly from the doctrine of Christ. That the phrase, *the righteousness of God*, in the sense I

have given, was not unknown to the Old Testament writers, appears from Micah vi. What is called (verse 5) *the righteousness of the Lord*, which God wanted that the people should know, he explained (verse 8) to be what the Lord required of them; namely, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God. Now *the righteousness of God* meant, in this discourse by our Lord, is doubtless what he had been explaining to them, and contrasting with the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees."

The distinction between the pharisaical righteousness, and the righteousness which God requires, is again brought to view by Paul, in stating to the Philippians what he had endured that he might "win Christ, and be found in him,—not," he says, "having *mine own righteousness* which is of the law, but *that which is through the faith of Christ*, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Philip. iii. 5, 6. Instead of that self-invented righteousness of which he and others had formerly boasted, he wished to possess that more pure and spiritual righteousness, which results from cordial faith in Christ, and obedience to his precepts.

"The righteousness which is by faith" does not consist in a mere belief of any truth whatever, but in such obedience as the truth believed requires. A belief that there is such a God as is made known in the Bible, involves an obligation to acknowledge him in all our ways, and to worship him in spirit and in truth. Such obedience to the dictates of the truth believed, is what I suppose to be meant by "the righteousness which is by faith." A belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Light and Savior of the world, requires of the believer, a disposition to learn of him who was meek and lowly of heart, to obey his precepts, and to imitate his example. Such obedience is "the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ," and such a righteousness as God requires for the remission of sins. That this hypothesis is correct, may appear from the following facts:—

1. It accords with what Peter exhorts Christians to “add” to their faith :—“ Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.” 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.

2. It accords with the wisdom that is from above :—“ But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” James iii. 17.

3. It accords with those fruits of the spirit, which are essential to the Christian character :—“ But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,”—or *fidelity*,—“ meekness, temperance.” Gal. v. 22, 23.

4. It accords with what is taught by the “grace of God,” which brings salvation :—“ For the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” Titus ii. 11, 12.

The dispositions and virtues enumerated by the Apostles in these several summaries are such as were enjoined by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount, while requiring of his disciples a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and pharisees, in those precepts, or “sayings,” obedience to which he called *doing the will of his Father*, and compared to building a “house on a rock.” The introductory part of the sermon exhibits those traits of character which insure that men shall be “blessed,” or happy, and these traits are formed of the dispositions and virtues which the Apostles enumerated in their summaries. And are not such dispositions and virtues the genuine fruit of *believing with the heart*, that Jesus Christ was set forth by God to declare the righteousness which he requires for the remission of sins?

I may now appeal to the consciences of my Christian brethren, and ask,—Can evidence equally clear be produced to prove, that reliance on vicarious sufferings is *re-*

quired by the gospel? or that this reliance is what is meant, by "the righteousness which is by faith?" Is there a shadow of proof, that such was the "faith," to which Peter exhorted Christians to "add" the list of virtues enumerated by him? Is such a reliance any where to be found among the things implied in the wisdom that is from above? Is such a reliance ever represented as a fruit of the spirit, or as an excellence of character, taught by the grace of God that brings salvation? In the chapter on Christ's views of his own sufferings, I think it was shown, that reliance on vicarious punishment, is not among the things to be brought to view at the day of judgment, as reasons why those on the right hand of the Judge are approved. If then such a reliance has no place in any list of *Christian virtues*, as given by inspired teachers, and will be of no account in the day of retribution, can it be otherwise than dangerous to regard it as the one thing needful to pardon and salvation?

As to what I conceive to be intended by the righteousness which is by faith, I have endeavored to be so perspicuous as not to be misunderstood. But if further illustration can make my meaning more obvious, I will here add, that, in my opinion, *walking with God* was the righteousness of Enoch's faith;—*obeying the warning voice of the Lord*, and thus preparing an ark to the saving of himself and his family, was the righteousness of Noah's faith;—*obeying the call* to leave his kindred to sojourn in a strange land, and manifesting a readiness even to sacrifice his beloved son, when he understood this to be the will of God, were instances, or examples of the righteousness which was by faith in Abraham, the friend of God. In a similar manner, that is, by obedience, others "*through faith wrought righteousness.*" Heb. xi. 33. Thus too by works of obedience, faith is perfected according to the explanation of the Apostle James, ii. 17-22.

Our Savior said, "that servant who *knew* his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." The same may be said of *faith* or *believing*. Neither knowledge nor faith constitutes righteousness. But righteousness consists

in *doing from the heart* what we *know* or *believe* to be the will of God. The more we know or believe of divine truth, or divine requirements, the more guilty we are, if we continue in disobedience. "Faith, without works" of obedience, "is dead," and is as useless, as a body without a soul or spirit. How dangerous then must be that doctrine, which teaches that obedience to the precepts of the gospel is of no avail as to pardon and acceptance with God; and, "that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification!"

In the Bible, penitent or good people are denominated "the righteous," "the holy," "the upright," "the merciful"; but I see no evidence that they are so called on account of reliance on the righteousness or vicarious sufferings of Christ. Indeed such a reliance is not a characteristic by which good people can be distinguished from the wicked; for it is as easy, and I believe it is as common, for wicked people, as for good people, to rely on what Christ has done and suffered, as the only ground of their hope. Such a reliance does not constitute any person a true disciple of Jesus Christ; and nothing short of cordial obedience to his commands can constitute a disciple indeed, or a real friend to the Savior of men. "Then said Jesus to those Jews that believed on him, If ye *continue in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed." John viii. 31. "Ye are my friends, if ye *do whatsoever I have commanded you*." John xv. 14. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 34, 35. But where do we find Christ saying,—'Then are ye my friends, if ye believe that I came to bear the punishment due to your sins?' or, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye believe that my righteousness is the only ground of the sinner's justification?' If Christ wholly omitted to teach any such doctrine, as a ground of justification, or as an evidence of discipleship, is it not presumption in uninspired men to rank such hypotheses among essential articles of faith, or to make a belief in them a test of Christian character?

I believe it to be true, and rejoice in the belief, that a large portion of the clergy who occasionally teach the doctrine of vicarious punishment, do much more commonly preach repentance for the remission of sins, and urge the necessity of obedience to the commands of Christ, as essential to salvation. The propriety and fervor with which they urge obedience to Christ, in a great measure counteracts the tendency of what they say on substituted suffering as the only ground of pardon, and on the worthlessness of obedience in reference to our acceptance with God. Yet while a belief in the doctrine of vicarious punishment is urged as essential to the character of a Christian, it is not to be supposed, that the evil tendency of the doctrine can be wholly counteracted by preaching of an opposite description. This tendency may too often appear in the temper and character of those who preach the doctrine. How often do some of them seem wholly to forget, that "To obey is better than sacrifice!" How often has a zeal for the doctrine of vicarious suffering been made a substitute for that "love one to another," by which the disciples of Christ were to be distinguished and known! When I see writings on the atonement interlarded with bitter sarcasms, reproaches, and denunciations, it reminds me of the lamentable facts, that the writers are avowedly worshippers of such a being as could not forgive his penitent offspring, without inflicting the desert of their sins on an innocent substitute; and that their creed also implies, that the love to brethren, required by the Savior, is of no use in reference to the pardon of their sins, or their acceptance with God. However sincerely I may lament that any of my brethren should entertain such a *faith*, I cannot wonder if such a *tree* sometimes bears other fruits than those of love. I hope the time is not far distant when the ministers of the gospel will better understand, that to love God with all the heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, is more pleasing to our heavenly Father than a reliance on vicarious sacrifice; and that the love which the gospel requires, worketh no ill to its neighbor, but leads Christians of each denomination to do unto others, as they would that others should do unto them. Happy will be the day when such

views of the gospel shall be generally entertained, and shall have their due influence on the hearts of Christians.

No. IV.

A Brighter Prospect.

THE work on the atoning sacrifice was introduced by an extract from the *Christian Spectator*, which presented but a gloomy prospect for the writer who should happen to deviate from the beaten path respecting the atonement. But in the number of the *Spectator* for June, 1829, I have discovered a paragraph which seems to afford a brighter prospect. With great pleasure I transcribe it for the perusal of my readers.

“It has been extensively asserted by able theological writers, that the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity; that atonement is made for none but the elect; and that mankind, previous to regeneration, have not sufficient power to exercise true repentance. These modifications of Christian doctrine are now extensively rejected; and the testimony of the Bible concerning the peculiar relation of Adam to his posterity, the nature of the atonement, and the ability of men to obey the will of God, when stripped of the appendages which had veiled it, shines out with new splendor and power. That there are not still remaining in our system, speculations as really erroneous; that a future generation will not detect, in the preaching which we call orthodox, a mixture of ‘philosophy falsely so called’; that the river of the water of life flows perfectly pure from the sanctuaries of our God, and has all that restoring influence which it would have, were it in no degree adulterated, is certainly not proved by the confidence which any one may have that it is so. *We*

may incautiously have received, as we find that others greater and better than ourselves have received, human theories for divine revelation ; and whoever comes to us, with any appearance of reason, to show in what particular we have done this, deserves our thanks, and is entitled to our careful and impartial attention."

At a time like the present, it is truly refreshing to read a passage from an able writer, which so frankly admits both the past and the present fallibility of the class of Christians to which he belongs ; and the possibility that even the writer himself may have "incautiously received human theories for divine revelation." Had the scribes and pharisees, during our Lord's ministry, but possessed candor like this, it might have saved them from the guilt of reproaching and crucifying the Savior of the world. But too many of them "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others." Hence, as the Messiah taught doctrines contrary to the popular creed, they were prepared to reject both him and his doctrines, and to imagine that they should offer acceptable sacrifices to God, by defaming the character, and taking the life of his Son. To similar delusions men are still liable.

Should the reviewer who wrote the paragraph which has been transcribed, have opportunity to read the chapters on the Atoning Sacrifice, his self-knowledge and sincerity in writing the last sentence may be sooner brought to a test, than he then anticipated. For it is, perhaps, not improbable, that his present views of the atonement are such as I have endeavored to prove not accordant with the gospel ; and I can hardly believe that he will be able to say, that there is not "any appearance of reason" in what I have written for that purpose. If not, he must feel bound to give me "a careful and impartial attention." This is all I have to request of him, or of any other writer, or reader. I frankly adopt his language as my own. I am as liable to err as he is. If what I have written shall be the means of convincing him of error, the gain will be on his part. Should he or any other writer convince me of error, he may be called the victor, but I

shall be the gainer. And I hope I am not yet too old to learn, or too uncandid to be willing to exchange error for truth.

I have long been pleased with the resolution of President Edwards, which the reviewer has mentioned with approbation. After reflecting on the fact, that "Old men seldom have any advantage from new discoveries, because these are beside a way of thinking which they have long been used to,"—the good man thus resolved,—“If ever I live to years, I will be impartial to hear reasons of all pretended discoveries, and receive them, if rational, how long so ever I may have been used to another way of thinking.” He who acts on this principle, may be ever improving his mind, and correcting his own errors. But a man who flatters himself that there can be no danger of his being in error, while on the popular side of a controversy, gives ample evidence that he is *now* in error, and is likely to retain it as long as he lives. Persons of this character too often seem to imagine that their time cannot be better employed, than in blasting the reputation of such men as dare to think for themselves; and who, by inquiry, find reason to deviate from the traditionary path. Less of this practice would be prevalent, if Christians in general would adopt the principle of Bishop Watson. In his answer to Paine, he has this remark,—“A philosopher, in search of truth, forfeits with me all claim to candor and impartiality, when he introduces railing for reasoning, and illiberal sarcasm in the room of argument.” Happy it might have been for our country, had this practice been confined to avowed Deists, or had it been buried in the grave of Thomas Paine. But is it not a lamentable fact, that writers, even of the present age, with high pretensions to Christianity, are not behind Mr. Paine, except in point of time, in regard to “railing,” and “illiberal sarcasm?” and that, too, while professedly vindicating the Christian religion, the very soul of which is *love*? Is it not to be deplored, that Christians should thus set an example of one of the most detestable vices which ever disturbed the peace of man?

If, during the little time I may have to live, any candid writer shall convince me that my present views of the atoning sacrifice are erroneous, I hope I shall have the magnanimity frankly and publicly to retract them. But at my age, it is not to be expected of me, that I shall engage in controversy to *defend* what I have written. Should the work be assailed with the spirit of reproach and sarcasm, the writer, whoever he may be that shall adopt this course, may feel perfectly assured beforehand, that what he may write will be neither *answered* nor *read* by me. Such a spirit, I regard as the bane of the Christian religion, beneath the dignity of a disciple of Christ, and so *contagious*, that no one can volunteer a contact with it, without danger of contamination.

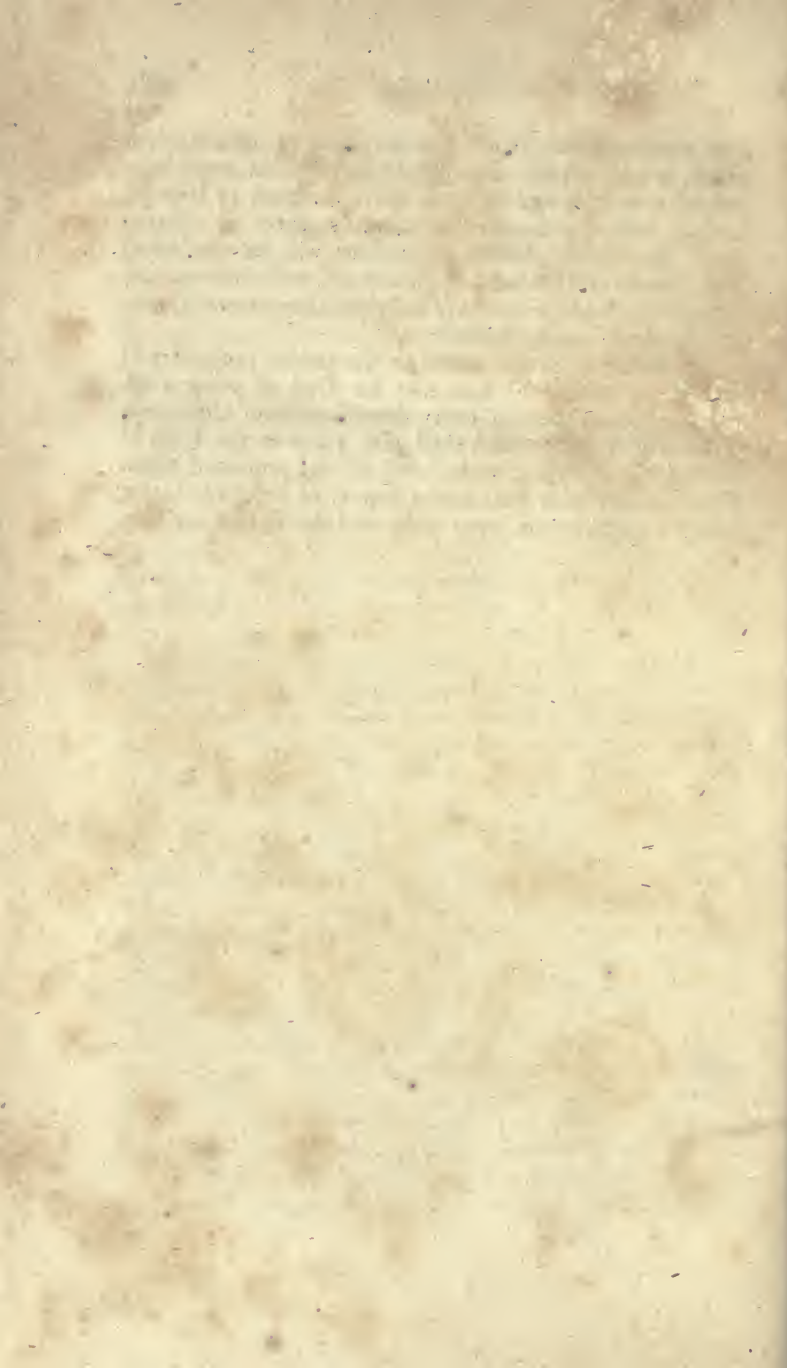
If writers and readers would adopt the candid sentiments of the Christian Spectator which have been quoted, and would feel and act as becomes fallible men, great advantages might result both from inquiry and discussion. There is not, in my opinion, any reason to suppose, that the people of any sect or party are free from great errors; and were this view of the matter generally adopted in the inquiries and discussions of the day, the different parties and writers might be mutually useful to each other. But when it is the object of one party to traduce and calumniate another, bitterness and alienation,—not love and unity,—must be the natural fruits. God may, indeed, overrule such controversies for good,—so he may the sanguinary exploits of political warfare; but both are, in their nature, repugnant to the spirit of the Christian religion, and abhorred in the sight of God. “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, demoniacal. For where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

Should this heavenly wisdom become duly prevalent, it will not only banish war and persecution, but change the character of theological controversy among Christians.

Each individual will then feel that he is liable to be in error, while he thinks he is in the right. In the same light he will regard all his brethren, whether they agree with him, or dissent from his opinions. He will ponder on past events, particularly on those which occurred during the ministry of the Messiah,—how the majority by a self-sufficient spirit, and an obstinate adherence to traditionary opinions, placed themselves in the wrong, and became revilers and persecutors of the Prince of life and peace ;—how often, too, since that time, the minority were in the right, while treated as heretics, infidels, or wicked men,—how innumerable and how great must have been the changes of public opinion, since the time that our ancestors were all Pagans,—and how certain it is, that in regard to every such change for the better, the majority were in the wrong, till the change was effected. Dissenters from the popular creed will also understand, that men may have changed their opinions, and still be in error. On each side of a controversy, persons will reflect on the various circumstances from which diversity of opinion may result, besides that of moral depravity of heart,—the great diversity in mental powers, in the modes of education, in the means of information, and in the leisure and opportunities for inquiry possessed by different persons. Each will also understand, that truth is as important to others, as it is to himself ; that others may view the matter in this light, and be as impartial as he is in their inquiries, and yet form different opinions from the same portions of Scripture. We may likewise anticipate, that it will be better understood than it now is ; that although correct opinions are very important, yet the essence of religion does not consist in correct opinions, but in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God. There is still another consideration which may have a salutary influence. It is this,—that the diversity of opinion among Christians gives opportunity for the trial of their several tempers, that each may better know what manner of spirit he is of, whether, like the ‘ publicans,’ he loves those only who love him or are of his party, or whether his love, like the love of God, extends to all, even to the evil and unthankful. These vari-

ous considerations, under the direction of that wisdom which is from above, will naturally produce in each individual, a humble and cautious spirit in regard to himself, and a brotherly tenderness towards such as dissent from his views. Hence discussions will be conducted with the spirit of kindness, meekness, and forbearance, and for the noble purposes of individual improvement, mutual instruction, and mutual love.

Happy the men who shall be the cordial promoters of such a reformation! And may the God of peace multiply such characters in every denomination of Christians, till all sectarian hostilities shall give place to the fruits of the spirit, "*love, joy, peace,*" and all the professed disciples of Jesus shall unite in the prayer of their Lord, that they all may be one, even as he and the Father are one.











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